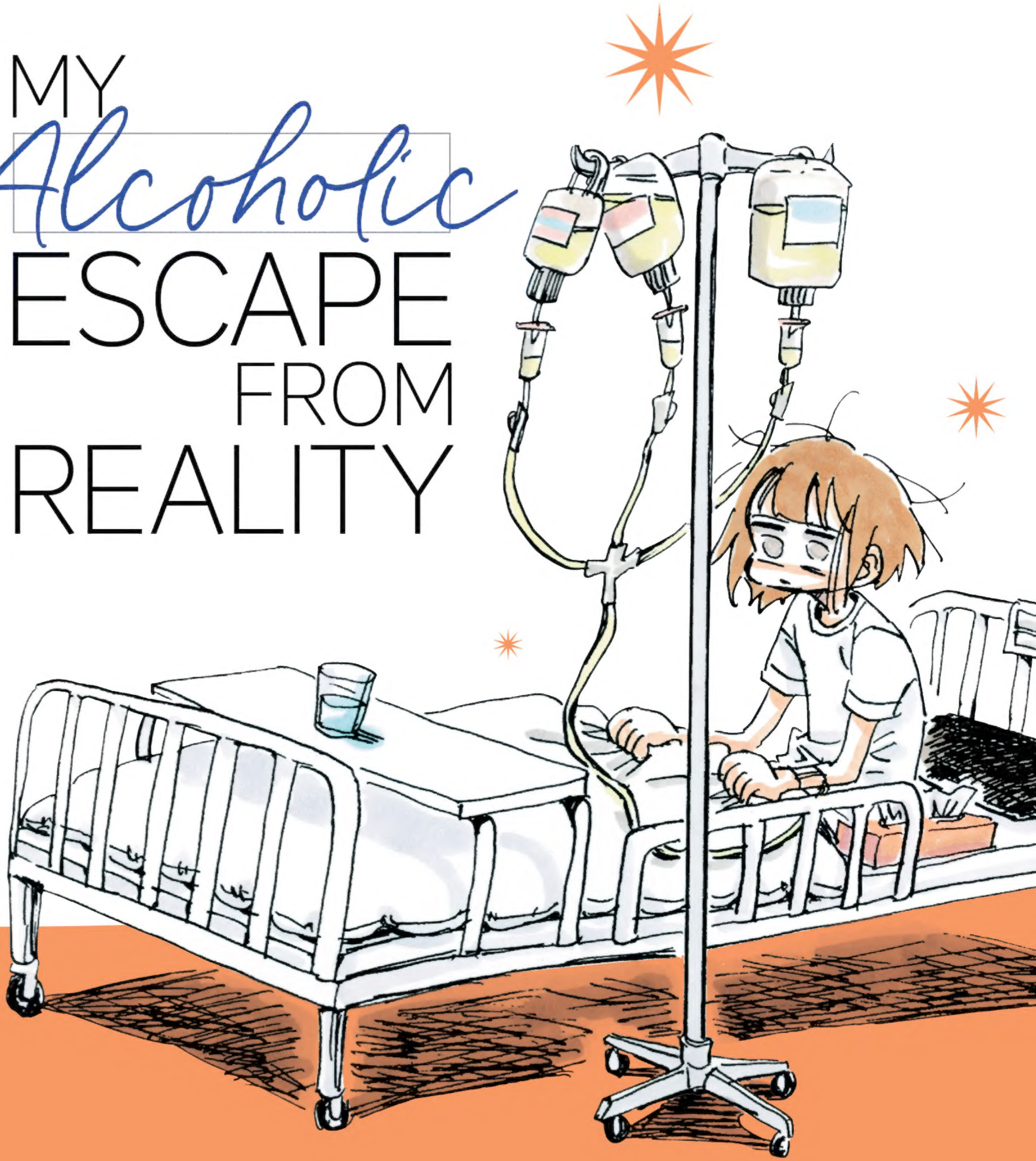
MY *Alcoholic* ESCAPE FROM REALITY



From the Bestselling Author of
My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness and
My Solo Exchange Diary

(True) Story & Art by
Nagata Kabi

MY *Alcoholic* ESCAPE FROM REALITY

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The various medical treatments and results depicted in this book are limited by the author's experience, perception, and decisions.
Please do not self-diagnose or self-medicate.
If you need help, speak to a medical professional.

My Alcoholic Escape from Reality

YOU HAVE ACUTE PANCREATITIS, INDUCED BY ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION.

ALONG WITH FATTY LIVER.

PROLOGUE

WHAT'S "PANCREATITIS"?!

HUH ?!!

?!

LOOK AT THIS.

TEST RESULT

AP

FL

MOM

YOU NEED TO BE HOSPITALIZED-- NOW.

REALLY ?!

γ-GTP 1112↑

※NORMAL RANGE: =16~73

WH-WHOA...

It all started on the afternoon of October 7, 2018.

.....?

I'LL JUST TAKE SOME MEDS.

MAYBE 'CAUSE I FELL ASLEEP WITHOUT A BLANKET.

THIS STUFF ALWAYS FIXES MY STOMACH-ACHES.

MY... STOMACH HURTS.

or painkiller worked.

LOXONIN

STOMACH-ACHE

But no stomach medicine...

SOME-THING'S DEFI-NITELY WRONG!!

Around 6 P.M.

THIS CAN'T BE A NORMAL STOMACH-ACHE!!

It only got worse.

SOME-THING'S REALLY WRONG.

I-I FEEL LIKE...

MY STOMACH HURTS REALLY BAD...!

M- MOM...

CAUSING TROUBLE & PATHETIC

She took me there in a taxi.

TAXI

YES, HELLO?

(YES, SHE REALLY HAD TO DO IT FOR ME...)

My mom found a clinic open in the middle of a three-day weekend.

HOW MUCH ALCOHOL HAVE YOU BEEN *DRINKING?*

.....

TEST RESULTS

!...

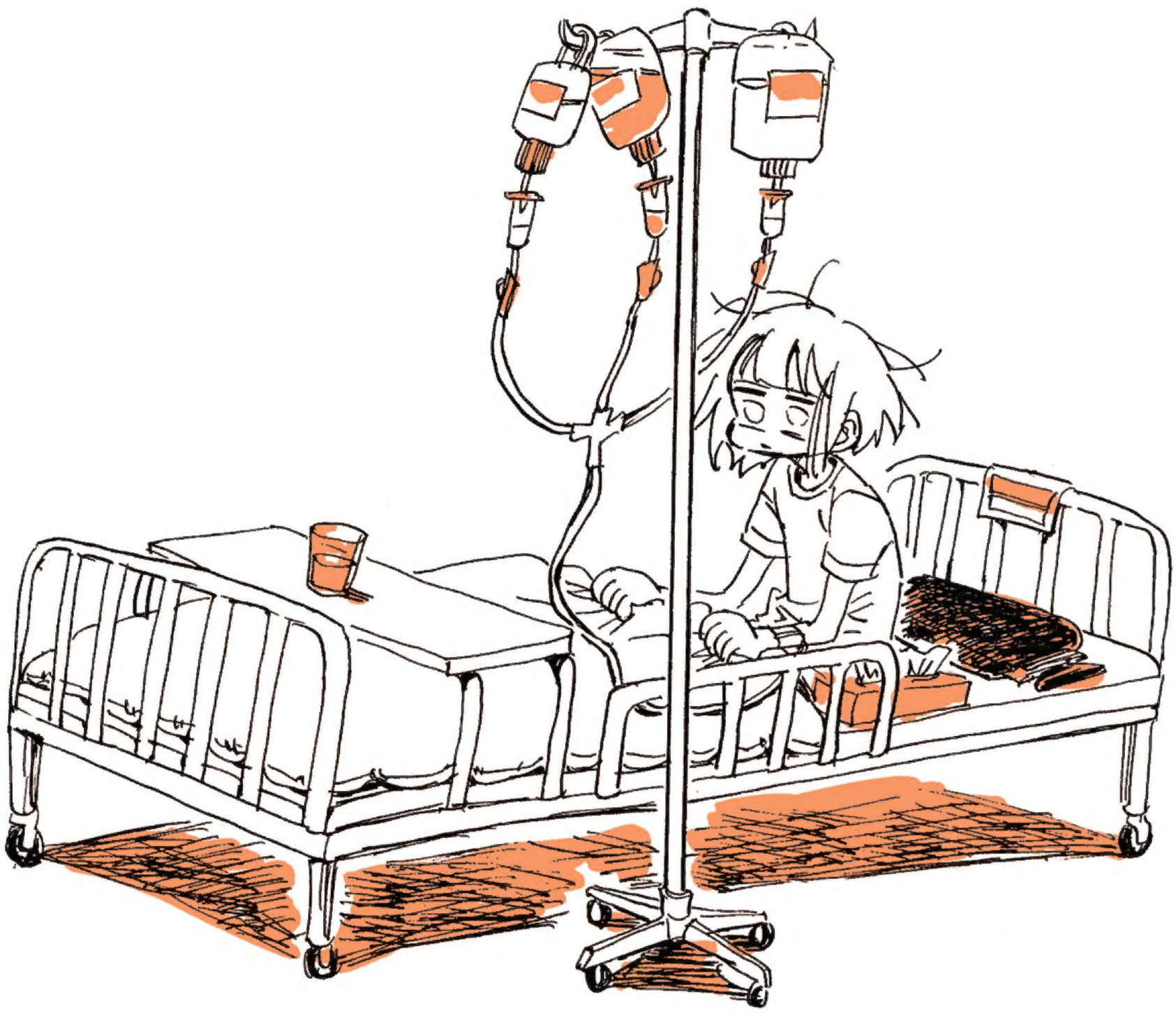
it all happened so fast.

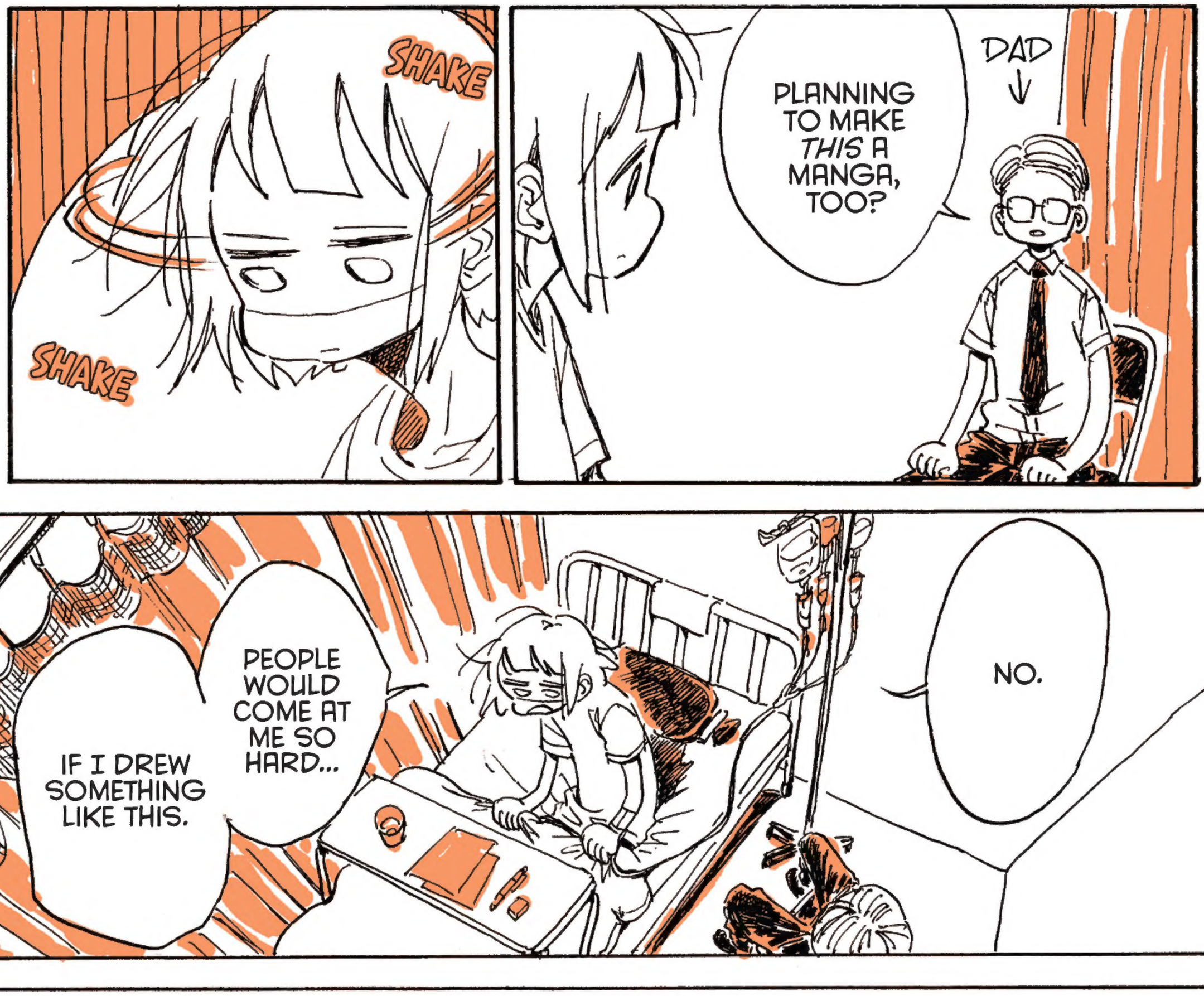
HOS- PITAL. GO.

We waited for my turn, and after the blood tests and CT scan...

That's how a manga artist with a drinking problem and mental health issues, around age thirty, was hospitalized on October 7, 201 for alcohol-induced acute pancreatitis and fatty liver. She was discharged on October 26.

And, well...





this is the story
of how I got there
and then drew
about it.

CHAPTER 1

DON'T TELL MY DOCTOR!!

I'll tell you, *and you alone,* exactly how much I drank.

I was a mess-- getting dead drunk and wetting the bed and stuff.

I wrote about drinking too much and ending up in the hospital back in 2017, in *My Solo Exchange Diary* Volume 2.

I saw bars open along the way, trying to lure in holiday visitors.

OPEN

On my way home from the shrine on New Year's Day...

Then came 2018.

I'M FREEZING!

UUNH...

HIGH-BALL
TOFU SALAD
NORI SEAWEED STRIPS
TOFU
SLICED CABBAGE
It worked. I wandered into one for a drink.
. . . . .
BAR
のみや
And that led to me bar hopping... every day.
WE'RE OPEN
BAR
BROWN SUGAR SHOCHU WITH WATER!
2 P.M. OPENING
The earliest place opened at 2 P.M. I could literally drink all day there.
A SMOKED MEAT PLACE WHERE A WAITRESS WITH A GREAT SMILE MIXES STRONG DRINKS.
THERE ARE TEN BETWEEN MY PLACE AND THE STATION.
= BAR
Bars are clustered near my house, for some reason.
HOME
FANCY BARS
CHEAP HIGHBALLS
STATION
OPENS AT 2 P.M.

I realized an Isomaru Suisan was nearby, too.

(I wish I *hadn't* learned that.)

SO GLAD 24h WE'RE OPEN!

ISOMARU

SUISAN

One day...

I'd go out in the middle of the night if I had insomnia.

CAN'T SLEEP... MAYBE I'LL JUST GO.

4:00 AM

HIGHBALL

At the time, I was having trouble sleeping, so I started drinking early in the morning.

FRYING SOME SHRIMP.

For one, I hated doing **nothing** at home when I couldn't concentrate on work.

MENTAL STATE AT THE TIME

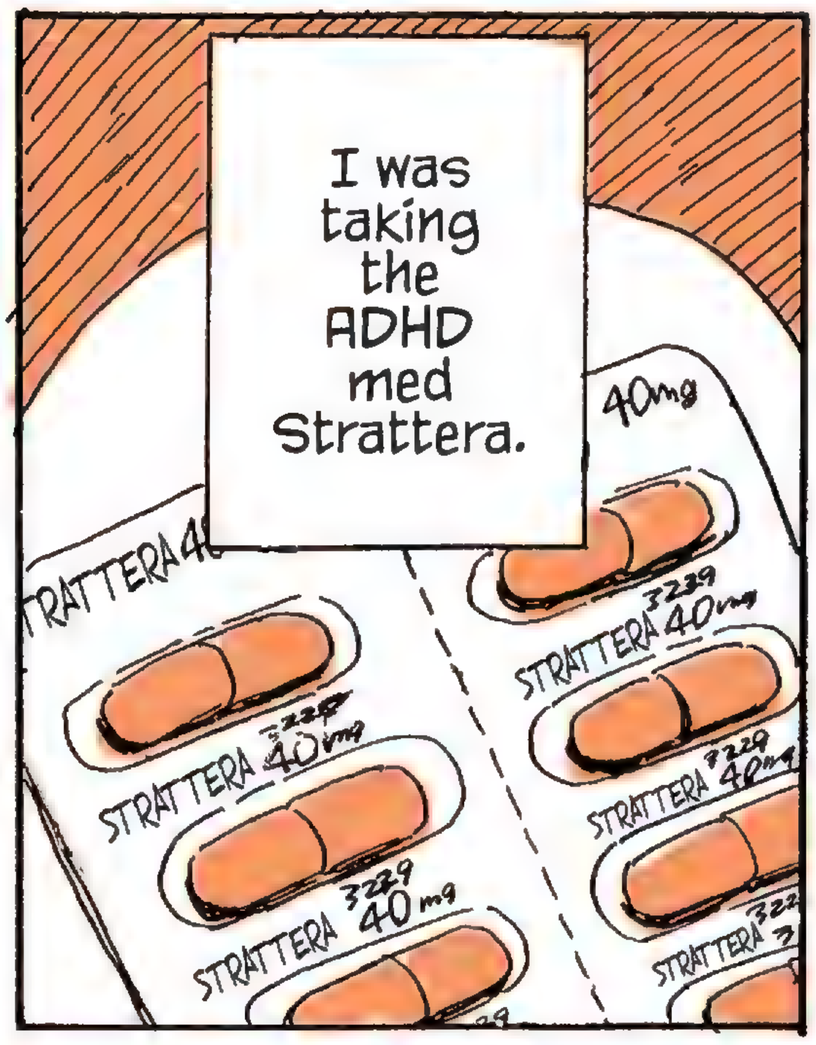
Don't make me stay sober!

I got obsessed with bar-hopping for a bunch of reasons.

© KAZE TO KI NO UTA (THE POEM OF WIND AND TREES)

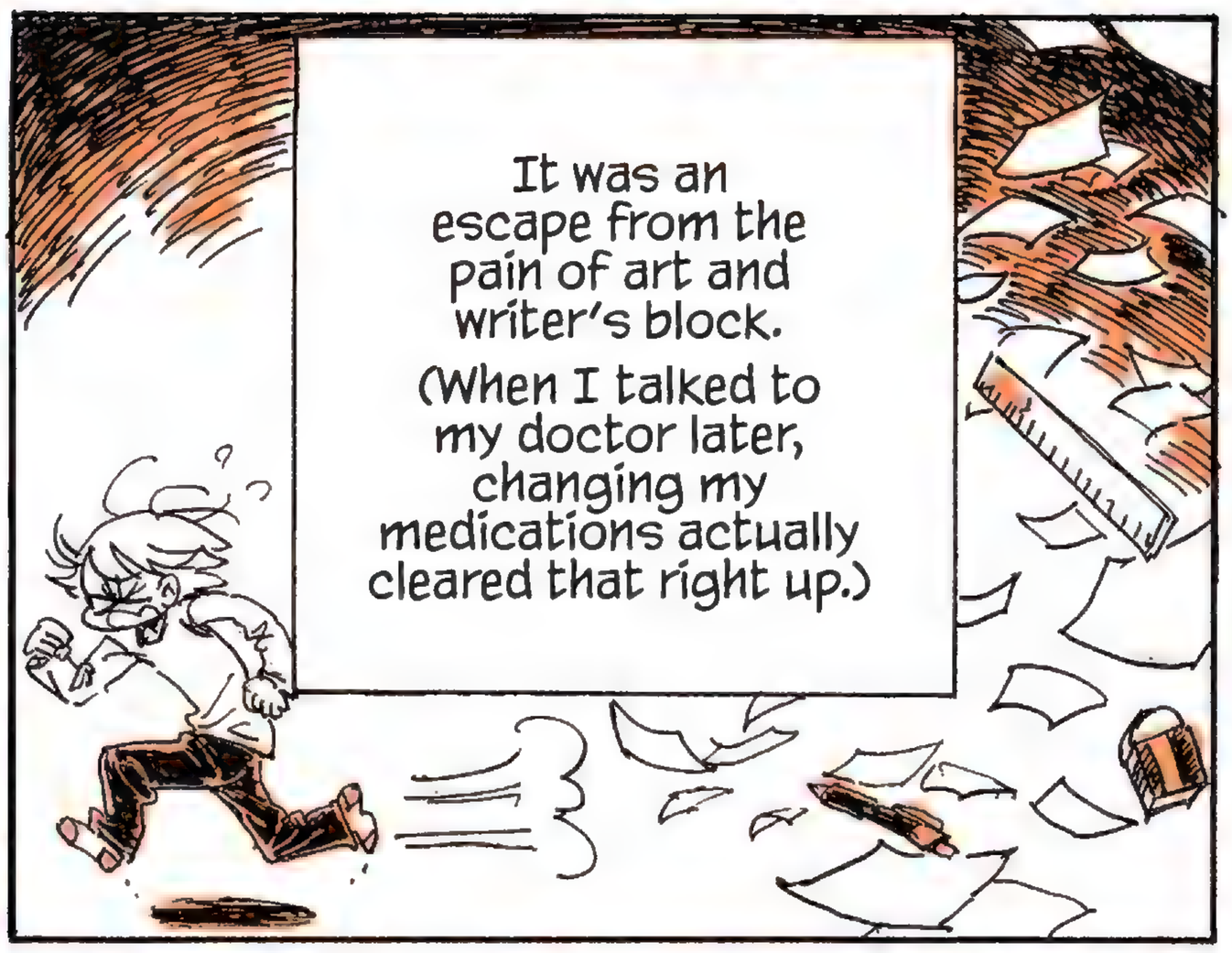
I CONSTANTLY FELT LIKE THIS.

I was taking the ADHD med Strattera.



It was an escape from the pain of art and writer's block.

(When I talked to my doctor later, changing my medications actually cleared that right up.)

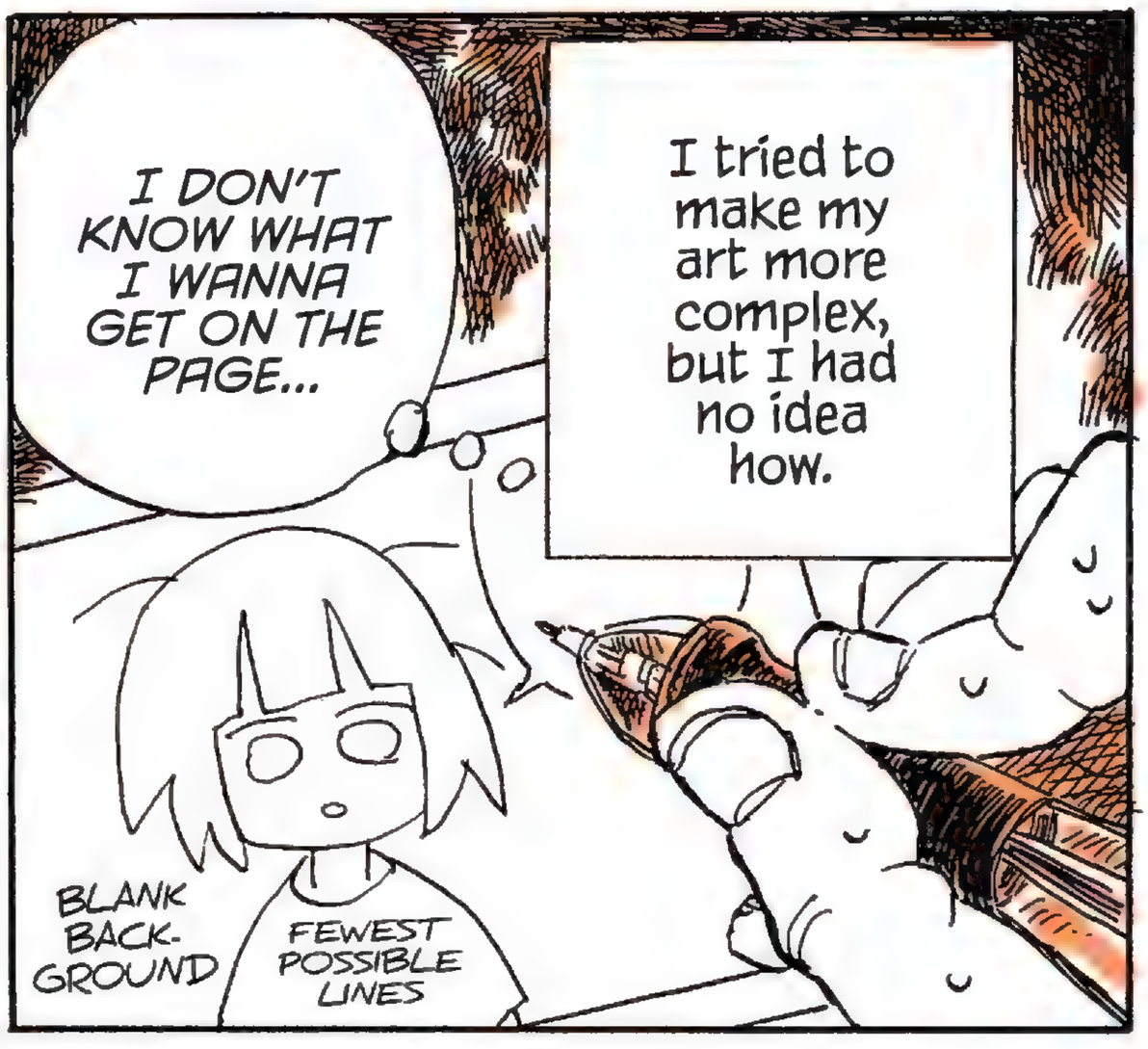


And then I stopped having any ideas at all.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANNA GET ON THE PAGE...

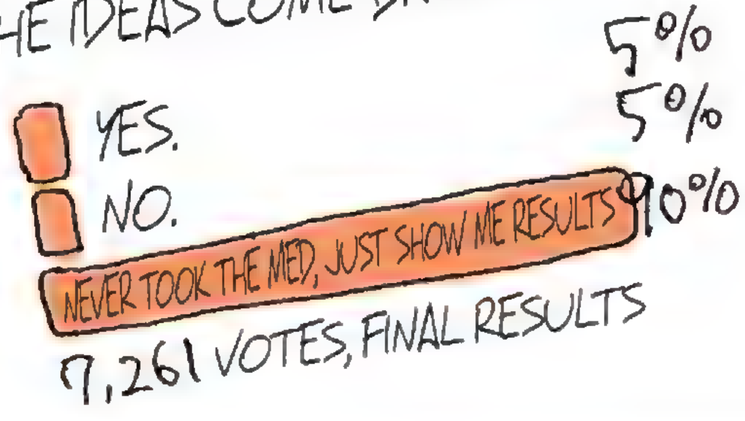
I tried to make my art more complex, but I had no idea how.



that about half of creators taking Strattera had that experience.

[CREATORS WITH ADHD, I'D LOVE YOUR HELP!]

HAVE YOU EVER HAD YOUR IDEAS DRY UP WHILE YOU'RE ON STRATTERA, BUT WHEN YOU STOP TAKING IT, THE IDEAS COME BACK?



In a survey I did later on Twitter, I found out...

Don't make me stay sober!

feeling like this.

I couldn't stop...

AND SO I DRANK.

© KAZE TO KI NO UTA (THE POEM OF WIND AND TREES)

My newest memoir came out that February, too.



ON SALE FEB 14, 2018!!

EXUDING "DON'T TALK TO ME" VIBES!

I didn't want to talk to people who were successfully working (like the staff), so I just stared at my phone while I pounded drinks back.

MEGA HIGH

HAPPY HOUR: 90円 (USUALLY 390円).

SHOULD I GET YOU THE USUAL?

HELLO!!

URK!

All the bars remembered me.

BAR-TENDER

Yeah. So...

YOU STOPPING IN ON YOUR WAY TO WORK?!

OH!

GOOD TO SEE YOU!!

SEATING FOR ONE.

They eventually stopped saying "Welcome" and moved to...

I started drinking at home.

AT HOME

COLD TURKEY

SHOCHU

WATER

That's when I quit bar-hopping pretty abruptly.

I got ice from a fridge I still had from when I lived alone.

I always had shochu in my room, and I mainly drank it with Calpis.

I don't remember when exactly I made the switch. I mean, I was drunk all the time.

RECIPE

WATER

CALPIS

SHOCHU

DRINKING OUTSIDE

WALKING

DRINKING INSIDE

It was *so* hard to pour-- I thought it would kill me. Be careful what you buy.

SPLOOSH

AHHH!

To save money, I once bought a four-liter bottle of shochu.

BUT YEAH, I CAN'T JUST... TELL THE DOCTOR ALL THAT.

CHAPTER 2

Night came, and the pain got even worse.

CURTAIN

SNR

SNRR

ZZZ...

I didn't want to bother the other patients, so I tried to stay quiet.

WINDOW

WINDOW

EMPTY

I was in a four-person room.

OLD LADY (INJURED)

CURTAIN

OLD LADY (SICK)

CURTAIN

MEWO

ME

DOOR

HALLWAY

For the first time in my life, I pressed the call button for a nurse.

HNNNN!

CLI

CK

IT HURTS SO *BAAAD*...

.....

That eventually failed.

I'LL GET YOU SOME-THING FOR THE PAIN RIGHT AWAY!

PROFESSIONAL

SORRY, M-MY STOMACH HURTS.

IS SOME-THING WRONG ...?

When she came...

GASP!

And soon...

WATER PILLOW

They were injected into the valve on my IV.

SHOT

VALVE

ARM

THERE'S A STOPCOCK HERE.

IV

She gave me painkillers-- over and over.

The giant shot was useless, but the small shot worked great and let me sleep!

※NOT EXAGGERATING THE SIZE DIFFERENCE.

TINY!

ALMOST STYLISH.

DU

DUN

WORKS, THEN I CAN SLEEP.

ABSOLUTELY DOESN'T WORK.

I realized that there were **two** types of painkillers.

I burned that into my brain.

TH- THE LITTLE NEEDLE!! LITTLE!!!

LITTLE? WHAT DO YOU...?

And started asking for it straight-up.

When I looked up Buscopan later, "doesn't work" was the auto-suggest. (Don't judge it just on that, though.)

BUSCOPAN

BUSCOPAN ~.~

BUSCOPAN DOESN'T WORK

Turns out the big one was Buscopan and the small one was Subutex.

BUSCOPAN

SUBUTEX

T

ABOUT 20CM (7.87").

The pain was like a giant sea urchin rolling between my ribs and down into my abdomen.

UGGGH...

THAT BECAME PAINFUL, TOO.

Even lying down, the sea urchin would jump around wildly inside me.

OW, OW, OW!

SHWUP

PAIN

SITTING UP

When I moved, the sea urchin would stab me.

PAIN

FLOP

ROLLING OVER

I-I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF THIS MUCH PAIN...

WILL PUSH SOMETHING VALUABLE OUT OF ME?

This went on for several days.

CLI

CK

LABOR PAINS ⇨

BIRTH OF A NEW LIFE, THAT KINDA THING.

ALTHOUGH, I DON'T NEED A WHOLE NEW LIFE...

I... I JUST WANT MY WORK TO GO WELL.

LIKE I'LL GIVE BIRTH TO SOMETHING. THE START OF A NEW LIFE.

My thoughts went wild.

FEVER
38.5°C
FEVER
NAUSEA
NAUSEA
PAIN
NOTE:
38.5°C = 101.3°F.
WE'RE DEPRESSING!
It wasn't just pain-- I was incredibly nauseous.
THE ACUTE PANCREATITIS TRIO!
GLUCOSE
?
ANTI-BIO-TICS
WITH THE IV, I THINK I'M OKAY?
When I couldn't drink...
WAHOO!
WAHOO!
I couldn't even drink water.
URP.
SO I NEED WATER ORALLY, TOO?
URP...
SWISH
I CAN'T EVEN DRAW IT!!
YOUR BLOOD'S TOO THICK ...!!
WHAT THE HECK ?!
they couldn't take my blood.

PHONE ADDICT

EVEN LOOKING AT MY PHONE IS HARD...

Even so...

I had zero appetite.

38.5°

DOESN'T FEEL LIKE THE TIME FOR... FOOD.

I hadn't eaten since entering the hospital.

NAGATA @.....

I'M IN THE HOSPITAL.

there's definitely proof that I Tweeted.

I'VE GOT A SERIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION.

KA-SNAP

HUH ?!

IT'S FROM MY EDITOR.

I caught a message on Day Two in the hospital.

THE LIGHT IS SO...

MINUTES

I CAN'T ANY-MORE!

HOURS

I repeated the cycle of squinting at my phone (for a few minutes), then lying down with my eyes closed (for a few hours).

YES, IT'S THAT BAD...

11:11

EDITOR

THE ENGLISH EDITION OF MY LESBIAN EXPERIENCE WITH LONELINESS WON BEST MANGA AT THE HARVEY AWARDS.

2018/10/09 10:31

WHAT ?!

FWUMP

AGH! IT'S ALL IN ENGLISH! I'LL GET SOME SLEEP FIRST...

Plus...

COULDN'T MAGICALLY READ IT AFTER GETTING SOME SLEEP.

11:11

TODAY

COUSIN

CONGRATS ON YOUR HARVEY!!

HANG ON! HOW DO YOU...?!

And one from my cousin.

HAGH!

WHY ?!! NOW ?!!!

REQUEST FOR AN ESSAY ON THE SUBJECT OF FOOD.

NAH! ZEE! UH~!

NAUSEA

AH-HH!

WHY NOW ?!!

my biggest job of 2018 suddenly rolled in.

MY SCHEDULE WAS EMPTY BEFORE THIS!!

HOW ARE YOU?

When he was off, I got a younger doctor.

My doctor came by daily.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, NAGATA-SAN?

WHEN PANCRE-ATITIS GETS BAD...

LOOK. I'LL BE REAL.

DOWN WE GO.

THE PAIN MED'S WORKING-- IT DOESN'T HURT RIGHT NOW.

)) n

AND SEND MEDICINE AND NUTRITION DIRECTLY TO THE INTESTINES.

WE HAVE TO PUT A **LINE** INTO THE BIG VESSEL IN YOUR NECK...

EVERYTHING YOU TRY TO EAT, YOU'LL VOMIT BACK UP.

YOU'LL STOP BEING ABLE TO DIGEST AND ABSORB NUTRITION ON YOUR OWN.

THAT COULD BE YOUR FUTURE.

IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL...

SC...

SCARY ~!!!

My Alcoholic
Escape from
Reality

I continued to battle that enormous, useless shot.

UM... AH!

AAAA-AAHH-HHHH!!

MASSIVE YET NEVER WORKS!

CHAPTER 3

By about the third day, I could finally sit up--even through the pain and the fever.

38.5°

TO: MOM

PLEASE BRING MY STORYBOARDS.

I had to wait two hours between shots.

EVERY-THING STILL HURTS...

THEY GAVE ME THE BIG ONE AGAIN...

I got my family to bring me my work stuff.

HALF-FINISHED STORYBOARD

ERASER

COPY PAPER

BALLPOINT PEN

RULER

PENCIL

TAPE

STORYBOARD TOOL ALL-STARS

It was for an original fiction piece I'd been tackling since September.

That let me revisit one of my stories from before the hospital.

38.5°c

I'd made my parents cry (in a bad way) with my three published memoirs, so I was determined to switch.

I'M NEVER DRAWING AUTOBIO AGAIN!!

I'M GONNA DO FICTION, JUST YOU WATCH...!!

HOO

YEAH!

What actually sealed the deal for me was reading Chapter 40 of *Daru-chan*, a manga that I'd read serialized on the Shiseido website.

That hit me hard.

out of your work.

I want you to keep that...

Or about our personal life.

Don't write about me.

After a poem she wrote was selected in an open call, Daru-chan's lover, Hiro-san, tells her...

THIS IS... EXACTLY HOW IT FEELS.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU THAT.

That was her response.

to my mom.

MOM

I copied down everything Hiro-san said in Chapter 40 and gave it...

.....

INCREDIBLE! I WANNA KEEP DRAWING FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!!

THIS IS HOW WE MOVE FORWARD!!

Feelings flooded through me.

I planned to never draw about our lives again.

I firmly locked away all that autobio potential and set my pen to **fiction.**

NO!

BY THE WORK I WANNA DO!!

I WANNA HEAR MY PARENTS SAY THEY'RE AMAZED...

Whatever. Just hurry up and get a notebook from the gift shop so you can journal.

HELL, I'M NOT EVEN GONNA TAKE NOTES ON THIS HOSPITAL STAY!!

DU

DUUN

I'M DONE WITH MEMOIRS!

I... regretted that decision a few months later (i.e. now).

TODAY, YOU'LL START A NOT-QUITE-LIQUID DIET THAT'LL PUT SOME HAIR ON YOUR CHEST!!

YOUR BLOOD WORK'S LOOKING BETTER, THOUGH!

:

My sickness leveled up.

"SEVERE ACUTE PANCREATITIS."

I got a second CT scan, too. My "acute pancreatitis" had become...

"TO PUT HAIR ON YOUR CHEST."

THERE'S DESSERT, TOO!!

JELLY

AND EVEN A SIDE DISH!!

WATERY RICE PORRIDGE

The hospital then delivered the first, *uh*, meal in question.

The IV was definitely annoying.

IF YOU DON'T EAT, WE CAN'T TAKE OUT THE IV.

DOC

NYAGH?!

LEFTOVERS

?!

My arm would swell up.

CALL BUTTON

CLI-

THROB

CK

BRIGHT RED

HOW'D IT GET ALL THE WAY UP THERE?!

My blood kept backing up into it.

THAT'S NOT ME!!!!

OH CRAP!!

ROOM 301
TANABE TOYOKO

And... mistakes were made.

MY BODY'S ALREADY SUCKED UP HALF OF IT!!

...

HRM?

DANE!

I'LL PREP YOU, OKAY?!

OH, IS SHE GONNA TAKE OUT THE IV?!!

A FLEETING MOMENT OF JOY.

HOW ABOUT WE GET YOU IN THE BATH?

HI, NA-GATA-SAN!

CARE ASSIST-SAN

← STILL CONNECTED.

CLING WRAP

KRK\\

KRK\\

HUH...?

1 WRAP IN PLASTIC.

WHAA ~??

ALL DONE!!

2 SEAL IT WITH TAPE.

They had a whole **system** to keep the IV going.

A LITTLE PLACE FOR IT TO HANG.

.....

PATIENT

.....

COME ON NOW! THAT'S NOT A MIC STAND!!

JOLT

NURSE

HEY!!

(FROM THE HALLWAY.)

I guess the IVs annoyed everyone.

I FEEL THAT.

SOUNDS LIKE A PATIENT LOOKING FOR THE EASIEST WAY TO CARRY IT.

BUT I... BLAH BLAH BLAH.

PATIENT

MUFFLED ARGUING (FROM THE HALLWAY.)

WHAT? THE BUSCOPAN DOES WORK, THOUGH.

I GOT THE SHOT THAT DOESN'T WORK, SO I'M IN PAIN.

HUGE! AND INEFFECTIVE!

BUSCOPAN

YET AGAIN...

OH!

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

CHANCE MEETING.

It definitely didn't work for me...

IT WORKS JUST FINE~!

HE INSISTS!!

IT DOESN'T WORK! AT ALL!!

I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT I CAN HERE...

YOU FINISHED UP THE MEDICINE YOU BROUGHT FROM HOME.

One day, I got some news.

PHARMACIST

Concerta is an ADHD medication, and only licensed hospitals can prescribe it.

LICENSE NEEDED

NO LICENSE NEEDED

CONCERTA (27MG)

STRATTERA

YOU HAVE TO GET A PRESCRIPTION DIRECTLY FROM THE DOCTOR.

BUT I CAN'T PRESCRIBE CONCERTA.

New!! • URSODEOXYCHOLIC ACID (LIVER BILE SECRETION MED)

New!! • CAMOSTAT (PANCREATITIS MED)

• POLYTOSE New!! (MEDICATION TO HELP DIGESTION)

THAT'S SO MANY...

• OTHERS: ANTI-NAUSEA MEDICATION, ETC. New!!

+

• CONCERTA
• ARIPIPRAZOLE
• DIAZEPAM
• ETIZOLAM
• TETRAMIDE
• SOMELIN
• DIAZEPAM

MENTAL HEALTH MEDS I WAS ORIGINALLY TAKING.

This was my lineup of prescriptions, by the way.

I'LL BE FINE!!

THAT WOULD (TEMPORARILY) FREE ME FROM THE IV!!

GRAR

WILL YOU BE ALL RIGHT DOING THAT...?

BUT I'M WORRIED...

IF YOU GET PERMISSION TO LEAVE, YOU CAN GET THE PRESCRIPTION FILLED YOURSELF.

LEAVE ?!

The big moment came.

OH! THE BAG'S FINISHED NOW, HM?

FIDGET FIDGET FIDGET

THEY'RE GONNA TAKE OUT MY IV (TEMPORARILY) TOMORROW! CAN'T WAIT~!!

MMM...

HUH ?!

VALVE

IV

PLOK

THERE ...?!

NEEDLE

I'LL TAKE THIS OFF FOR YOU.

FIDGET FIDGET

NICE AND NEAT

AAUUUGH!!

CAPPED.

THE TUBE'S TIED UP WITH AN ELASTIC.

WHAT THE--?

NEEDLE IS STILL IN.

!

AND THEN EVERYTHING GETS WRAPPED UP IN A NET.

THERE! ALL DONE!

It looked like that story "Screw-Style," where a boy wanders war-torn Japan trying to find a doctor to fix a pierced artery.

"SCREW-STYLE" ©YOSHIHARU TSUGE.

AND SO, WHENEVER I TIGHTEN THE SCREW, MY ARM GROWS NUMB.

THIS FEELS... FAMILIAR.

ARM

and then I set off, screw-style.

EXCURSION PERMISSION
ROOM #: NAME:
DESTINATION:

EXCURSION PERMISSION
ROOM #: NAME:

I filled out the form that asked where I was going and what hours I'd be gone...

FILL OUT TWO COPIES.

SUBMIT ONE, KEEP ONE.

FWIP

A TAXI!!

WAVE

OH!

.....

STAGGER...

STAGGER...

STAGGER...

TAXI

WAS READY TO RUN.

VROOM

SCREECH...

NAGATA

OO HOSPITAL, PLEASE...

I-I CAN'T RUN ANY-MORE...

I lumbered weirdly to the cab, neither walking nor running.

GET WELL, ALL RIGHT ?!!

PANCRE-ATITIS CAN COME BACK, TOO!!

O-OKAY...

PSYCHIATRY

THAT MUST BE PAINFUL.

YOU HAVE PANCRE-ATITIS?!!

WHAAAT?!!

← PAPERS FROM THE HOSPITAL

I took a cab both ways and barely walked, but I was so exhausted that I went straight back to the hospital.

NOPE! CAN'T DO IT.

STAGGER...

STAGGER...

← 30 DAYS OF MEDICA-TION

STAGGER...

TAXI

I had mes-saged my mom.

I'LL STOP BY THE HOUSE AFTER THE DOCTOR.

The day before this...

AND THEY HOOKED UP THE IV ONCE AGAIN...

Then it was **time for sleep.**

When I brought her the meds, the pharmacist welcomed me like I'd just returned from some grand adventure.

AH, NAGATA-SAN! THANK GOOD-NESS~!!

WEL-COME BACK~!!

My Alcoholic
Escape from
Reality

PAIN

I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE!!

The pain stuck around, though.

I CAN KEEP GOING FOREVER!

GAME OVER

NAUSEA

FEVER

36.5°C

About six days in, both my nausea and fever were down.

NOTE: 36.5°C = 97.7°F.

SUPER STURDY

I learned that from my trip out.

BUT I CAN BARELY WALK WITH THE STAND'S SUPPORT...

KLAK KLAK

AS I WALKED AROUND.

And I **still** had the IV.

I THOUGHT I'D PUSH THE IV STAND...

OR WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE... ME?

I knew I had to eat food to secure my freedom.

ARE YOU HUNGRY? WANT A BITE TO EAT?

HUBBA

HUBBA

AHHH!

SOME-THING'S LEAKING!

Still, I was sick of the IV.

CLICK

CALL BUTTON

MY MOM BROUGHT ME A LONG-SLEEVED SHIRT.

FOO

OD

MISO SOUP WITHOUT SHELLFISH

RICE PORRIDGE

HUGE

EXTRA

BOWL

TOPPING

STEWED FRUIT

I didn't want to eat it.

I'VE *REALLY* HAD ENOUGH OF THE PORRIDGE AND FRUIT...

Despite my lack of appetite, they gave me **plenty** of rice porridge.

Keep this to yourself, okay?

So... I got **sneaky.**

GLANCE

GLANCE

SHWP

SHLOP

PLOP PLOP

then discreetly dumped the porridge and other food into one of the bags.

I bought plastic bags and a newspaper at the gift shop...

OONEWS

POLYETHYLENE BAGS (50 COUNT)

SECRET WEAPONS

I'M SO SORRY.

and tossed the whole mess into my room's garbage bin. I executed this cover-up at every meal.

I'M GONNA PAY FOR THIS...

ONE GARBAGE CAN PER PERSON.

I wrapped the bag in news-paper...

SQUEEZE

SQUEEZE

BA-DMP

SHZZ

K

BA-DMP

GARBAGE BAG

I don't think the old cleaning lady who came to take the garbage every morning caught on.

WE'RE GOING TO STOP THE IV AND START YOU ON ORAL MEDICATION TODAY!!

That was my little scheme. On my tenth day in the hospital...

LET'S GET THIS OUT OF YOU~!

YES, PLEASE!!

And then, finally...

I could think of nothing else.

THEY'RE TAKING THE IV OUT...!

It was time at last.

GIDDY

GIDDY

I was screw-style once again.

I'LL BE BACK LATER!

YOU STILL NEED THREE SHOTS A DAY THROUGH THAT PORT~!

Those three shots...

NOOO!!

P

TO THE DRIP

NOT AGAAIN!!!

THERE

OK

GAAH!!

NEEDLE STILL IN ME

STILL NOTHING, HUH?

The next one was at lunch (where I'd wait around, depending on the day)...

GUH?

started in the early morning (the first one woke me up).

YOUR BLOOD HARDENS IN THE LINE, SO WE SEND THIS THROUGH FIRST.

And then there was *this* shot.

1 DO FIRST.

SALINE SOLUTION

2 SHOT COMES AFTER-WARD.

TO ARM

MANAGED TO FALL ASLEEP...

BUT! FINALLY...

and the last one came after lights-out, when I was asleep. (It *also* woke me up.)

The times were so weird.

It felt like the hardened blood was tearing through my veins. It **hurt.**

OWWWWWW!!

SQWERK

ARTIST'S RENDERING

SQWERK

HARD BLOOD

The noise it made freaked me out.

KRR KRR KRR KRR KRR KRR

I could see air going into my vein through the line.

AIR

IN

TO ARM

HHH

SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT IT'S CHILLY AND FEELS GOOD~!

IT'S NOT COLD?

NO, IT'S PAINFUL!

You sure about that?

IT'S A VEIN, SO IT'S ALL RIGHT~!

I only stopped getting them just a little bit before the day I was discharged.

UNTIL THE DOCTOR SAYS YOU'RE GOOD.

I'LL BE BACK LATER, 'KAY~?

UM...

HOW LONG WILL I KEEP GETTING THESE SHOTS?

UH-HUH...

YOU CAN'T EAT THIS OR THAT...

ONLY X GRAMS (I FORGET) OF FAT A DAY.

ET CETERA...

NO FIBROUS VEGETABLES, APPARENTLY.

BEEF'S A NO.

AND NO STIMULANTS, CAFFEINE, OR CARBONATED WATER.

Oh, and I guess my dad was doing research-- every time he visited, he brought a wealth of info on pancreatitis.

BEEF (WITH FAT)

FIBROUS VEGGIES

WHAT'S GOING ON?!

the hospital kept serving special meals that included Dad's "forbidden" foods, so I had no idea what to believe.

STUNNED

THAT'S A **TON** OF RESTRICTIONS! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO LIVE ON NOW?

But...

MENU

OH!

IT WAS HERE!!

Pretty late in my stay, I noticed a posted menu.

clear...

They gave me a lot of clear soups.

CLEAR SOUP: UDON, MEAT, ONIONS

CLEAR SOUP: MEAT, ONIONS, EGG

CLEAR SOUP: VEGGIES & MEAT

WHY, THOUGH?

AND WE'RE IN THE KANSAI AREA, SO IT'S NOT BLAND.

BREAKFAST
BANANA
MILK
KATSU
TOJI CUTLETS W/EGG
CLEAR BROTH
RICE
LUNCH
HAYASHI RICE
SALAD
DINNER
BREAD
VEGG
RICE
LUNCH
KATSU TOJI CUTLETS!! FOR A SICK PERSON ?!!
AND STEW! LUCKY!
BREAKFAST
BREAD
BANANA
MILK
STEW
DRESSED VEGGIES
RICE
STEWED FISH
I discovered the **real** food other people got--not my mysterious clear soup.

CAKE
CURRY
STEW
FRIED FOOD
For pancreatitis, fat is definitely bad.
(※ YOU NEED IT, THOUGH, SO YOU CAN HAVE A LITTLE.)
NO! FAT!
PANCREAS

That sent me burrowing into my bed for half the day.
THAT STEWED FRUIT AND RICE PORRIDGE EVERY MORNING ...!!
YOGURT
STEWED FRUIT
PORRIDGE
SWEET
You're supposed to get your energy from sugars instead.
YOGURT
LOW FAT
STEWED FRUIT
STARCH
SUGAR
RICE PORRIDGE
ANNOYINGLY COMMON BIG THREE

I blurted out the opposite.

I ALWAYS REALLY ENJOY THE MEALS!!

Even though I was so miserable over the food that I grumbled about it every day...

Just once, the nutritionist came to my room.

And I forgot to ask her what foods are good or bad for pancreatitis.

GOOD-NESS! THANK YOU SO MUCH!! ♡

REALLY ...?!!

I made good on *that*, at least.

She just forbade sweets.

OH!

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T BUY AND EAT EXTRA SWEETS!

NO!

CANDY

Or looked up menus at restaurants and imprinted every picture on my eyeballs.

STARE...

I just stared silently at the desserts and sandwiches at the gift shop.

STARE...

CANDY

SANDWICH

I guess gazing intensely at food is a thing for people on special diets.

WHEN I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL ON A SPECIAL DIET, I STARED AT YAKINIKU LUNCHES, TOO.

While texting with a friend, they said...

That physical exam, which was so painful when I'd first come to the hospital... had stopped hurting at all.

I'M GOING TO FEEL YOUR STOM-ACH, OKAY?

PUSH

PUSH

I'VE TAKEN A HUGE BLOW...

YOUR CASE WAS SERIOUS, BUT YOU'RE GETTING **MUCH** BETTER!!

NAGATA-SAN, YOUR TEST RESULTS ARE GREAT!

Maybe it was worth it.

OOH

TEST RESULTS

OJ

ONE MORE THING !!

OH !!

DUUN

(HE CAME BACK.)

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW. TAKE CARE!

THANK YOU, DOCTOR!

THICKER FOR YOU!!

STARTING TODAY, WE'LL FINALLY MAKE THAT RICE PORRIDGE...

I WANNA GO HOME...

.....!

CHAPTER 5

I started using the stairs as a voluntary physical therapy thing.

VERRRY

3F

1F

SLOOOW...

I MADE A RULE FOR MYSELF:

NO RAILS.

My inability to run had shocked me, and I'd been freed from the IV stand, so...

?!

WHY?

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU!!

AH!! NAGATA-SAN, THERE YOU ARE!!

Clearly, I had a long way to go before I'd be running again.

ARE YOU OKAY ?!

.....

YOUR ECG'S OFF THE CHARTS-- I DIDN'T KNOW **WHAT** HAPPENED!!

※I WAS WEARING A HOLTER MONITOR.

GOES IN YOUR POCKET.

ELEC-TRODES

LIKE THIS.

My treatment plan had included a two-week stay, give or take.

A FEW DAYS AFTER I FIRST ARRIVED, THEY GAVE ME A PAPER LIKE THIS.

HOSPITALIZATION DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT PLAN

I was coming up on two weeks in the hospital.

AFTER DIS-CHARGE, THESE MEDS...

NOW, FOR YOUR FOLLOW-UP VISITS.

I COULD HEAR IT...

THROUGH THE CURTAIN.

I GUESS THAT'S HOW IT WORKS.

HUNH...

When the hospital set my neighbor's discharge, doctors and nurses came pretty much daily for a week beforehand to explain stuff.

TESTS OR ANYTHING TO SEE IF I'M READY TO LEAVE.

FIDGET

FIDGET

AND I HAVEN'T GOTTEN ...

WANDER

WANDER

THEY HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING, EITHER.

HRRM...

IF THEY NEED SO MUCH PREP TIME, SHOULDN'T THEY BE DISCUSSING MY RELEASE DATE NOW?

HERE WE GOOO!!!

LET'S DO A CT SCAN NEXT WEEK, 'KAY?!

HEY, NAGATA-SAN!

SAID WITH THE SAME ENERGY AS, "LET'S TOTALLY HIT THE MALL!"

TROT TROT TROT

I'LL TAKE A LOOK LATER.

EAGER EAGER EAGER EAGER

YOU GOT THE CT SCAN TODAY?

Results came in the same day.

PLEASE TAKE A BREATH AND HOLD IT.

HUP!

That day, I got super worked up and threw myself into that scan.

INTENSE DEDICATION DOESN'T SHOW UP IN THE IMAGE, THOUGH.

HE SAID THAT LIKE I'M PREG-NANT.

I SEE... CON-GRATU-LATIONS.

BUT I WAS DOING BETTER, SO WHAT-EVER.

FIRST, A QUICK FEEL.

PRESS

PRESS

!!!!

I LOOKED AT YOUR SCAN.

BA-DMP

NAGATA-SAN.

And then, at last...

DID YOU SAY WEDNES-DAY?!

NO. END OF THE WEEK, I THINK.

※TODAY IS TUESDAY.

WHEN'S THE DAY, HUH? MAYBE--

BA-DMP

BA-DMP

HNFF.

BA-DMP

BA-DMP

AS FOR YOUR DIS-CHARGE ...

DISCHARGE, DISCHARGE, DISCHARGE, ***DISCHARGE !!!***

AFTER THAT, ONCE A MONTH.

YOU'LL HAVE A CHECK-IN TWO WEEKS LATER.

DIS-CHARGE

DIS-CHARGE DIS-CHARGE

YOU'LL BE AN OUTPA-TIENT.

AFTER YOU GO...

I'M GETTING OUT!! OUT!!!

OTHERWISE, YOU'LL SUFFER A RELAPSE.

KA-SNAP

VERDICT: DISCHARGE

LIVE BROAD-CAST

YOU'LL HAVE TO BE MEDICATED FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

KA-SNAP

HEY, IT'S ME!!

I'M GONNA BE DIS-CHARGED THIS WEEK!!

DISCHARGE AT END OF WEEK.

DISCHARGE AT END OF WEEK.

DISCH ARGE

AND ABSOLUTELY *NO* ALCOHOL!

SMOKE SIGNAL

BWOOAN

(DISCHARGE!)

ARE YOU EVEN LISTEN-ING?

CONCH

WHEW!

I TOLD EVERYONE.

. . . . . .

Wait. What...?

"AND ABSOLUTELY **NO** ALCOHOL!"

"YOU'LL HAVE TO BE MEDICATED FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

"OTHERWISE, YOU'LL SUFFER A RELAPSE.

IS COMING FOR SOULS.

SOOO, THE GOD OF DEATH...

CHAPTER 6

HOSPITAL PHONE LOUNGE

NOTES

STORYBOARDS

Before you ask, this was a work meeting.

I WAS DRAWING A STORY.

WELL, I'VE GOT MY RELEASE DATE, AT LEAST?

I'd grown less excited about discharge.

UHH...

AND HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

EDITOR

※ A DIFFERENT EDITOR FROM THE ONE WHO TOLD ME ABOUT THE HARVEY AWARD.

It was overtaken by the shock and confusion of an irreversible change to my body.

PASSAGE OF TIME

RELEASE SET

WHEW...

JOY

JOY

AHHH!

SHOCK & CONFUSION

I was still happy about leaving, but my joy had... settled down.

I DID SOME RESEARCH.

ONE CAUSE OF PANCREATITIS:

YEARS (MORE THAN TEN) OF DRINKING!!

AND FOUND STUFF LIKE THIS.

APPARENTLY, I CAN NEVER DRINK AGAIN...

I'LL BE AN OUT-PATIENT AND TAKE MEDS MY WHOLE LIFE.

I know I didn't sound convincing, considering I knocked back booze every time I went out with that editor.

UH-HUH...

AFTER A MEASLY THREE YEARS OF DRINKING ...

(HONEST!)

I DIDN'T DRINK AT ALL UNTIL I WAS TWENTY-EIGHT.

NO!!

I WENT THROUGH THIS PHASE...

U-28

I THOUGHT I DIDN'T DESERVE A DRINK.

There were plenty of edits to my story-boards.

BUT NOW THE TENSION'S BEEN CUT. OR... SOME-THING.

IT'S LIKE, WHEN I REALIZED I WOULD GET BETTER, I WAS REALLY HAPPY!

UGH.

WE'RE HERE REPORTING FROM THE RAMEN FESTIVAL, FOLKS!!

MY OLD LADY NEIGHBOR UNPLUGGED HER HEAD-PHONES.

As sickness left me, **depres-sion** took its place.

I'M TOO WIPED TO DO THEM. OR EVEN GET UP.

OYSTER!!!!

THE MYSTERY FLAVOR IS...

FWUP

IT'S SO LOUD!! I DON'T CARE!!

WHAT A SOUP!! CAN YOU GUESS WHAT THE BASE IS?!

FORGET RAMEN, I'VE GOT PANCREATITIS AND FATTY LIVER!!

ONE MOMENT, DEAR!

FUMBLE

MY GOOD-NESS! I'M SO SORRY!

FUMBLE

UM, EXCUSE ME?

I THINK YOUR HEADPHONES GOT UN-PLUGGED.

TH-THANK YOU, THIS IS SO... KIND.

EXPENSIVE CHOCOLATE

OH.

HUH?!

HUH?

HERE. TAKE THIS.

SQUEEZE

GREAT. NOW I'M... SAD.

IT'S THE KIND THEY SELL IN FANCY SHOPS, TOO.

RIGHT.

I CAN'T HAVE CHOCOLATE ANYMORE.

CAN'T TAKE THE FAT...

I WISH THEY'D TALK TO ME.

They told my neighbor that people are usually discharged in the morning-- I just happened to overhear it.

SILENCE

ALONE...

No one came to me to say anything about my discharge.

FRIEND'S B-DAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR OO-CHAN! HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU~!

Or I'd be the only one who didn't get a piece of cake, and no one would notice.

I'd often get left behind when the class moved rooms. I'd still be in there when they turned off the lights.

As a kid...

?!

KINDERGARTEN

Yes, I was always the person everyone forgot about, so I waited anxiously there in that hospital bed.

MID-PARTY

OH! THAT'S RIGHT-- I INVITED YOU!!

MAKING THE "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" FACE.

There was even a time when someone forgot they even *invited* me to their party!

DAY 16

FREEDOM!!

DAYS 11 TO 16

SCREW-STYLE & PAINFUL SHOTS

ADMISSION TO DAY 11

IV

Four days before release, they finally took out the needle and tube that had been stabbed into me.

DEAD OF NIGHT

CALL BUTTON

CLICK

EXCEPT THE OLD NEEDLE SITE HURTS AND NOW I CAN'T SLEEP!!

FREEDOM, ONE PIECE AT TIME...!!

They removed the ECG electrodes.

I HAD TO SUFFER THROUGH IT.

Near morning, I finally slept a little.

HM? I WONDER WHY...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S CAUSING YOUR PAIN, BUT I'M AFRAID I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING FOR IT.

MY FIRST PRE-RELEASE EVENT!!

HERE ARE YOUR MEDS!

ORAL MEDS
NAGATA KABI-SAMA

The day before discharge, the pharmacist snuck in under the wire.

ER, NAGATA-SAN?

Maybe unable to bear anymore, my neighbor...

NO IDEA. (NO ONE TOLD ME.)

WHAT TIME ARE YOU BEING DIS-CHARGED?

FROM: MOM

I KNOW THAT.

I immediately emailed my mom and told her what the lady said.

That's how Mom replied.

.....

AHHH!

told me about dis-charge stuff.

GO TO WINDOW TWO...

IF YOU BRING YOUR RECEIPT, THEY'LL RETURN THE THIRTY THOUSAND YEN* FROM YOUR ADMISSION.

*ABOUT ¥280 U.S. DOLLARS.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

TRUDGE TRUDGE

IT'S NOT HAPPENING.

WHAT?!

WHY?!

My dad handled the discharge stuff.

EAGER EAGER

SHOULD BE ANY TIME NOW!

And so, the day finally came.

?

I DON'T CARRY A THING LIKE THAT AROUND.

WHY NOT?!

WHAT DO YOU USUALLY DO?!

NO WAY I CAN PAY 'EM...

AND I DON'T CARRY THAT KINDA CASH.

THEY WON'T TAKE MY CREDIT CARD...

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BANK CARD?!

THAT'S DANGER-OUS!

...

YOU KEEP THAT CARD ON YOU?!

HERE.

THEN...!

CAN YOU GO GET THE MONEY WITH MY BANK CARD?

WHY ?!

NO, I'LL GO TO THE BANK.

CREAK

RIGHT BEHIND THE HOSPITAL!

OH!

THERE'S A STORE AROUND THE CORNER.

SO SWEET...

FROM: MOM

I TOOK OUT YOUR WINTER BLANKET AND TURNED ON THE DEHUMIDIFIER. I'LL MAKE YOU SOME HOT VEGETABLE SOUP NOW.

THANK YOU...

My mother had been emailing me every day, bringing me clothes and stuff almost as often.

MOM

HOME

IT WAS STILL WARM OUT WHEN I CAME HERE.

HOT SOUP, TUCKED IN WITH MY BLANKET ...

HYU

SUMMER ENDED IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

ALL ON ITS OWN.

CHANGED.

FROM: MOM
IT'S COLD OUT, SO WEAR THE CLOTHES I BROUGHT YOU.

but the day I left, I stepped out into the fall.

I came to the hospital in short sleeves...

My Alcoholic Escape from Reality

I basically just slept for three whole days. It was *weird* how much I could sleep.

NIGHT

NOON

MORNING

WHAT ABOUT DINNER? YOUR MEDS?

UMP

The minute I got home, I slept **hard.**

FW

WINTER BLANKET

CHAPTER 7

After the shock of being sick, I couldn't get back on my feet.

AND I'M COLD.

I CAN'T DO ANY-THING.

I'M SAD AND SPACED OUT.

NOW MY MIND AND BODY ARE SICK...!!!

EVEN IF I'M MENTALLY ILL, AT LEAST MY *BODY* USED TO BE HEALTHY!

BODY

New!!

- PANCREATITIS ← New!!
- FATTY LIVER ← New!!

MIND

- ADHD
- DEPRESSION
- EATING DISORDER

WHOLE LIFE UN

I HAVE TO BE AN OUTPATIENT, TAKE MEDS...

AND NOT DRINK ALCOHOL.

MY. WHOLE. LIFE.

FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...

MAYBE BEING SAD ABOUT AN IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE IS KINDA LIKE... AGING...?

WHICH I CAN NEVER GET BACK.

THE TIME WHEN I WAS HEALTHY...

HEALTHY!!

IT'S **HEART-BREAKING** THAT MY BODY'S BEEN CHANGED FOREVER.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVE TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE WITH THIS ILLNESS...

GLOOM...

WHAT?

AN IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE IS SAD, HUH?

M-MOM?

YOU'LL GET MEDICINE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, AND IF YOU GO FOR REGULAR CHECKUPS, YOU'LL BE FINE!

WHY ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT IT LIKE THAT?

THAT'S... TRUE!!

. . . . . !!

I still couldn't fully believe it at the time, but I almost saw a ray of hope.

I-I GUESS.

LIKE WHEN A CHILD STOPS BEING BULLIED.

SOME IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES ARE *GOOD.*

THAT EXAMPLE'S KINDA UNSET-TLING...

A week after discharge, I washed my hair.

Maybe because of that, I felt good enough to get up and do stuff on the fourth day after discharge.

CLEANING THE BATH

BATHROOM AID

W.C.

I could even help with my grand-mother.

OUTSIDE WHEELCHAIR TO INSIDE WHEELCHAIR

AH, I WISH I'D JOURNALED IN THE HOSPITAL...

I was so **happy** I could do stuff again. I even restarted writing in my journal.

I picked up where I left off with the story-boards for my fiction piece.

I'M NOT SAD OR COLD TODAY!!

THE ONE FROM THE HOSPITAL.

That's all they said.

DEEP FRIED AND ALL THAT!

AVOID FRIED FOODS, OKAY?

AND NO ALCOHOL!!

As for the ongoing mystery of my future diet, I was finally told when I left the hospital.

But when I searched for that...

THERE'S PROBABLY READY-MADE FOOD FOR PANCREATITIS!!

OH, WAIT!

Of course, my new restrictions *did* end up being an extra burden on my mom when she was cooking.

THIS HAS 0 GRAMS OF FAT...

AND THIS HAS 0 GRAMS ...

NO! FATS!

PANCREAS

UGH!!

I HAVE TO MAKE IT?!!

There were a bunch of cookbooks for humans with pancreatitis, though.

MEALS FOR PANCREATITIS

PANCREATITIS RECIPES

google

PANCREATITIS

READY-MADE DOG MEALS FOR PANCREATITIS

all I found was stuff for dogs.

.....

I MIGHT'VE BEEN DOING THE SEARCH WRONG...

STAGGER...

STAGGER...

NO! FAT!

PANCREAS

I walked to the supermarket as physical therapy and searched for low-fat foods there.

CHIKUWA

SASAKAMA

The paste products and non-fried things were low-fat, high-protein, and cheaper than the dairy.

CRAB STICKS

CRAB STICKS

HANPEN

KAMABOKO

FISH PRODUCTS AND MORE...

LOW-FAT MILK

COTTAGE CHEESE

ZERO-FAT YOGURT

They had all kinds of zero and low-fat dairy products.

SKIM MILK

SKIM MILK

OG OF FAT!!

NONFAT MILK

HIGH PROTEIN!!

MM!

OMPF!

ZERO FAT

STAGGER...

STAGGER...

Apparently, you need protein to recover from pancreatitis, so I bought a bunch of those.

YES! LOW FAT AND HIGH PROTEIN!

PANCREAS

IS ACTUALLY REALLY GOOD!!

ZERO-FAT YOGURT...

OMPF!

And when I had some of the fish paste products with non-alcoholic beer...

NON-ALC

NO FAT AND HIGH PROTEIN IS TERRIFIC.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE EATING CAKE OR SOME-THING.

YUMMY...

Savor...

I CAN DRINK LIKE *THIIIS!!!*

A LOT LIKE DRINK-ING!!

TH-THIS FEELS...

THE KIND OLD PEOPLE BUY, OR YOU LEAVE AS AN OFFERING.

JAPANESE SNACKS ASSORTMENT

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M BUYING THIS STUFF IN MY EARLY THIRTIES...

THE BAG WITH THE LITTLE MONAKA CAKES AND DORAYAKI AND YOKAN.

For sweets, marshmallows, bolo cookies, castella cake, and other Japanese snacks were low fat.

YOKAN JELLY

MONAKA

BOLO

CASTELLA

MARSHMALLOWS

1

0G OF FAT

GONG GOONG

IS THIS REAL LIFE?! IT'S SOOO GOOD!!

THE PERFECT COMBO! WOW~!!

When I had castella cake and nonfat milk together...

2

GULP!

1

NOM!

HONEY

FAT: 0g

DRIZZLE

TOASTED

Put cottage cheese and honey on half an English muffin...

FAT: 4g / 100g

COTTAGE CHEESE

FAT: 0.9g / EACH

ENGLISH MUFFIN

And for bread, bagels and English muffins are low in fat.

FAT: 1.3g / EACH

BAGEL

NOT A DONUT!

※ DIFFERS FROM PRODUCT TO PRODUCT.

I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER!

AH, THE WORLD'S FULL OF SURPRISES.

NO! FAT!

PANCREAS

IT'S SO *CHIC!!* THE FLAVOR FILLS YOUR WHOLE MOUTH!!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!!

OKAY, I'LL TRY TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING FROM THE HOSPITAL AND...!!

WOO!

PEOPLE WILL CRITICIZE ME FOR IT, BUT IF THIS'S MY FUTURE, I CAN AT LEAST SHARE THE INFO!!

I WANNA DRAW THIS.

I...

.....

PANCREAS

SHE MAKES HERSELF SICK, CAUSES ALL THIS TROUBLE FOR HER FAMILY, THEN GOES WRITING ALL "BOO HOO ME."

NOTHING BUT TROUBLE.

SHE'S NOT EVEN SORRY.

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET, DRUNKIE.

IT'S PANCREATITIS THIS TIME? LOL, YOU'RE CANCELED.

I FEEL BAD FOR YOUR FAMILY.

NOOOPE.

HA! WHAT AN ALCOHOLIC.

NAGATA KABI: DRUNK

WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP DRINKING?

YEAH, THAT'S A NO FROM ME.

DRUNK.

WEREN'T YOU IN THE HOSPITAL BEFORE, TOO?

ON SECOND THOUGHT, LET'S NOT!!

YIKES! TOO RISKY.

.....

CHAPTER 8

NOT EVEN ONCE!

HAS YOUR STOMACH HURT AT ALL?

A month after I first got sick, I had a checkup as an outpatient on November 8.

1112

IT'S A TENTH OF WHAT IT WAS WHEN YOU CAME TO THE HOS-PITAL!!

WHOA...

γ GTP 150 H

※ NORMAL RANGE: 16~73.

IT'S STILL HIGH, THOUGH !!

YOUR γ-GTP'S GONE DOWN A LOT!

WANT TO SEE YOUR CT SCAN FROM WHEN YOU WERE ADMITTED?!

HEY!

I'M NOT, LIKE... EXCITED TO SEE IT.

IT'S LIKE HE'S ASKING IF I WANNA SEE A PIC OF HIS CAT.

AS A WARN-ING!

VWEEN

PRINTER

KLIKA KLIKA

I'LL GIVE YOU A COPY OF THAT SKY-HIGH RESULT FROM BACK THEN, TOO.

THAT'S A GALL-STONE.

HUH?

CT

RIBS

LIVER

SPINE

PANCREAS

I ENDED UP LOOKING AT IT.

THIS HERE'S YOUR LIVER. SEE? IT'S TOTALLY BLACK.

AND THIS IS THE STATE OF YOUR PANCREAS.

WHAT ?!

HEY, WHAT WOULD *YOU* THINK OF A γ-GTP OVER A THOUSAND?

GALL-STONE...!

HANG ON. DID HE JUST BREEZE PAST "GALL-STONE" ?!

CASUALLY! SMOOTHLY!

COME AGAIN IN A MONTH, OKAY?

ANYWAY, YOU'LL BE TAKING THE MEDS FOR A LONG TIME.

GALL-STONE...

TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

ALL FICTION

I was talking with three publishers, including one for the story-boards I'd worked on in the hospital.

PUB A

ONE FROM HOSPITAL

PUB B

PUB B

ONE FROM HOSPITAL

PUB A

OVERLOADED OUTLET

As for that **fiction** goal I was working toward...

But we were stuck on whether or not they'd even accept the story. It was rough.

we had to get confirmation and edits from the publisher.

After some back and forth with my (freelance) editor and some revisions...

First, the story-boards from the hospital.

STILL WORKING ON THEM.

TALK

CLIENT

EDITOR

TALK

PUBLISHER

EDITOR

BOARD

EDITS

We'd been at this since September.

EDITOR

At the beginning of November, I met with my editor in person, at which point things felt a little more promising.

That's what they told me.

WE'D LOVE A ONE-SHOT STORY ABOUT TEN PAGES LONG FOR NEXT SPRING!

Publisher A let me reschedule a meeting for one of the new projects, so we met in early November instead.

After I was hospital-ized...

This is how I was working on three fiction storyboards at once.

ONE FROM HOSPITAL

PUB A

PUB B

NOV.

OCT.

SEP.

After talking about it on the phone, it was decided the third project-- for Publisher B-- would also be a new one-shot.

AND THE SHOCK FROM DARU-CHAN CHAPTER 40.

stemmed from my guilt at making my parents cry with my previous memoirs.

The reason I was zeroing in so hard on fiction, as I mentioned before...

I couldn't keep running like I was working on something I **wanted** to do.

TH WU

?!

EDITS

NK

Since I was motivated by guilt, I lost my footing at unexpected moments-- like when I had to make major changes to one of my stories.

IF I CAN'T DO THIS... THEN I CAN'T DO *ANY-THING.*

DRAWING MANGA'S MY ONLY SKILL.

I SHOULDN'T BE TRIPPING OVER A THING LIKE THIS!!

I'M DOING THIS BECAUSE I WANT TO!

But I didn't realize that at the time.

I-I WANT A DRINK...!

NYRRGH! THIS IS SO HARD. IT HURTS!

AT THE VERY LEAST, I HAVE TO DRAW A WORK OF FICTION THEY CAN BE PROUD OF.

I CAN'T ERASE THE CRIME OF UPSETTING MY PARENTS...

I looked for and found all kinds of things in booze, but freedom from guilt was a big one.

GUILT

I realized how much I'd relied on alcohol.

BUT I CAN'T KEEP LIVING LIKE THIS...!!

I WAS TRYING TO BE AS PRODUCTIVE AS I COULD BE WITHOUT ALCOHOL, BUT NOT PUSH MYSELF *TOO* HARD.

I wanted to escape into booze.

Sure, it was *fun* to work on my fiction storyboards... but if the slightest thing went wrong, I was defenseless against it.

And my motivation to do fiction was a **recognition** of my guilt.

When I couldn't drink, I had to face my guilt with no absolutely no buffer.

D-DRINK...

DRAW. FICTION.

GUILT

EDITS

DRAW FICTION. NO MORE MEMOIRS.

GUILT

007

HOW ARE YOU GONNA MAKE UP FOR YOUR DEEDS, EXACTLY?

GUILT

MO

MO


At the time, I placated my desire for a drink with Calpis-- loaded with ice.
THIS IS BOOZE...
THIS IS BOOZE...
ICE
CALPIS
WATER
Non-alcoholic beer, too.
THIS IS ALCOHOL...
THIS IS ALCOHOL!
I rolled the lie through my brain as I chugged.
NON-ALC
And then, one day... I hit my limit.
It was just a month after I'd stopped drinking.
AAAAAAAAHHH
HHYEHH!!
AAA!!
AAHH!!
EEEE AAAAEHH!!

WHAT IF IT FLARES UP AGAIN AND KILLS ME?

NO. NO. I CAN *DIE* FROM PANCREATITIS!

I'D BE GUILTY OF A *MUCH* WORSE CRIME THAN WHAT I'M CARRYING NOW.

IF I LEFT MY PARENTS AFTER ALL THIS...

A PUNISHMENT FOR MY CRIME...

IS MY *PUNISH-MENT?*

HNGH.

MAYBE THIS SUFFER-ING...

I CAN'T BELIEVE *NOT DRINKING* IS THIS HARD...

Sobbing, I buried myself in blankets and screamed.

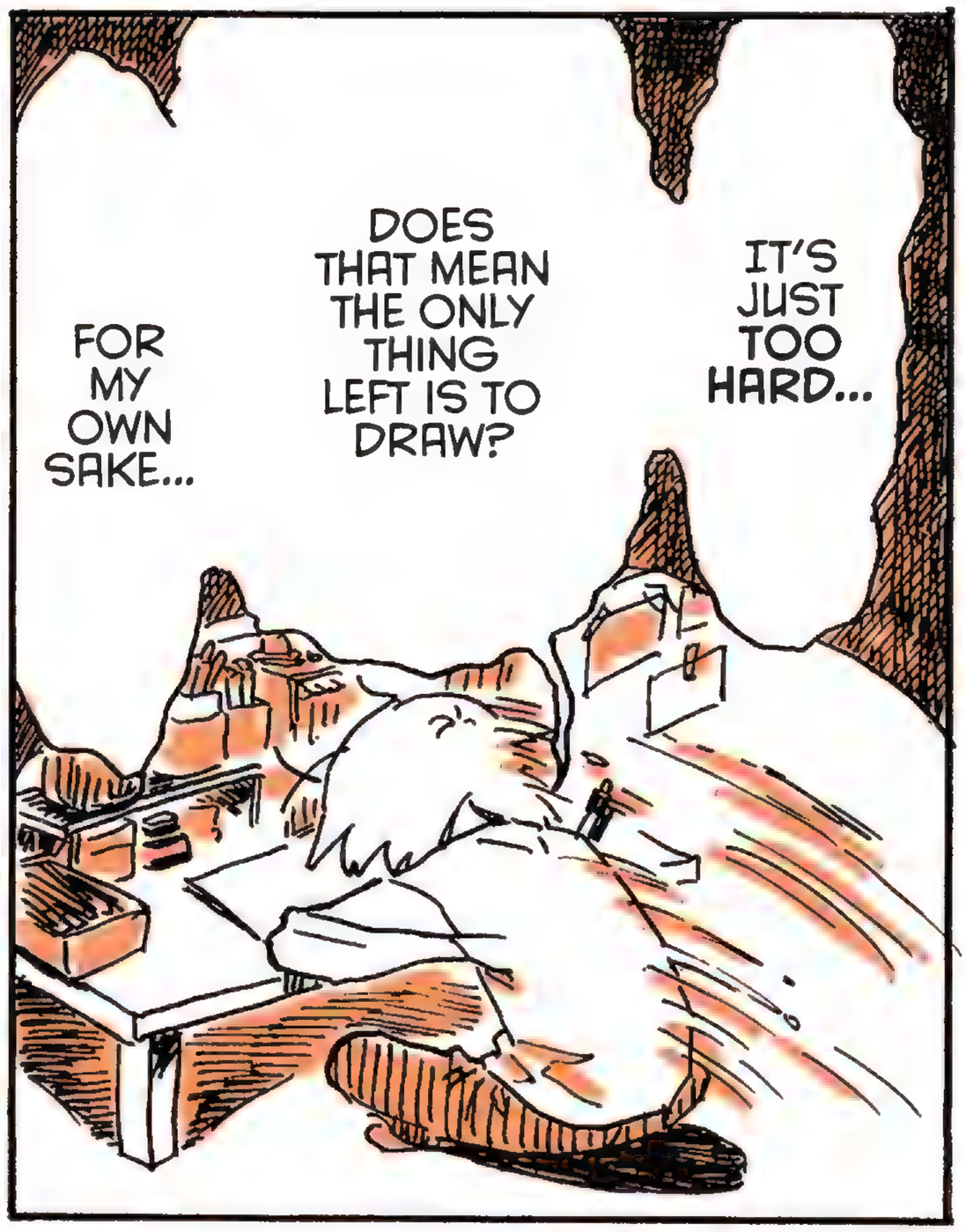
I SHOULD JUST DRINK AND FEEL BETTER ...!

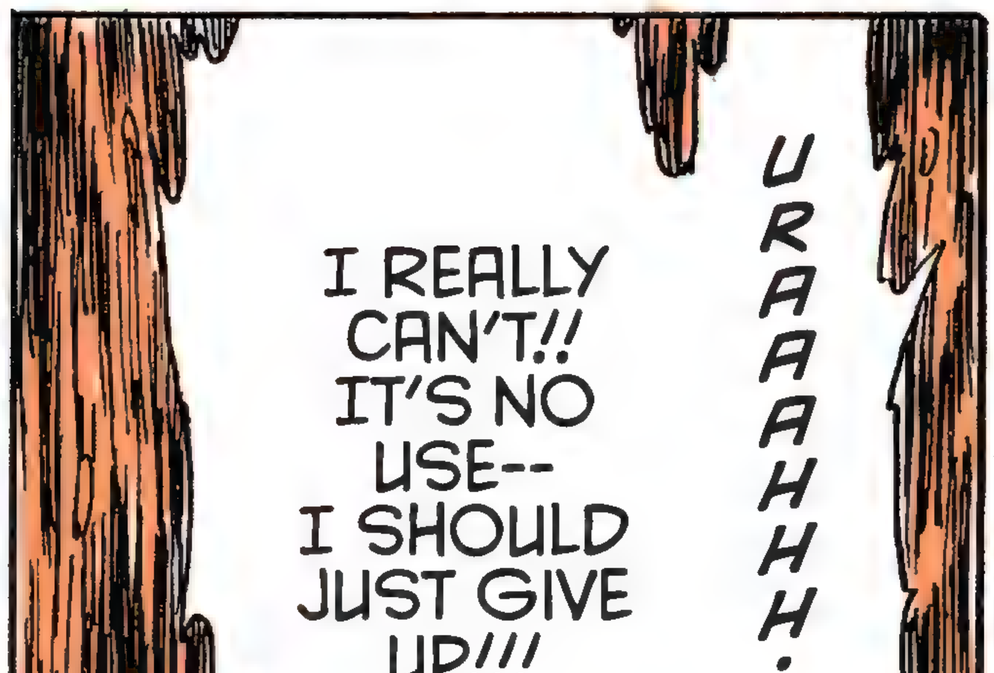
My journal's paper from that day is warped from my tears.

HELP, HELP, HELP! ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL, *ALCOHOL, HELP!*

IT'S HARD... IT HURTS. HELP. HELP. ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL.




FOR MY OWN SAKE...
DOES THAT MEAN THE ONLY THING LEFT IS TO DRAW?
IT'S JUST TOO HARD...


I REALLY CAN'T!! IT'S NO USE-- I SHOULD JUST GIVE UP!!!
URAAAHHH...!!!
NCH
SKR



"I KNOW ONLY TOO WELL THAT NOT DYING IS A DIFFICULT THING.

FOUND IN DEATH?

I-IS THE ONLY WAY OUT, IS THE ONLY PEACE...

"BUT WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW TOMORROW WILL COME AND DROP AN UNEXPECTED BIT OF HOPE INTO YOUR LAP, I WANT YOU NOT TO DIE."

That's what manga artist Uzuki Taeko said a few years ago about *My Solo Exchange Diary.*

YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FROM UZUKI TAEKO-SAN.

00/00 11:11

As I was lying there, in a world of pitch black... those words blazed, the only light in the dark.

November 12, at the Kakuyasu liquor store.

NAGATA STANDS IN KAKU-YASU.

CHAPTER 9

When I pushed the age verification button at the register...

I AM OVER 20 YEARS OLD.

IT HAD THE LOWEST ALCOHOL CONTENT.

My hand clenched over a can of 3% chuhai.

I felt free.

an overwhelming joy spread through my heart.

I AM OVER 20 YEARS OLD.

WHAT? I CAN HAVE ONE?!

NO! DRINKING!

U-28

BECAUSE IN MY YOUTH, I THOUGHT I DIDN'T DESERVE A DRINK.

For me, having a drink meant forgiving myself.

MEETINGS

EDITOR

It was me-- and others-- acknowledging that I was an adult.

I mean, I also really loved having a drink when it was warm out: window open, my favorite music in my ears.

And it wasn't *just* an escape, or that sense of adult-hood...

Weirdly, I liked booze even if I couldn't drink it... if that makes sense.

ALCOHOL

EVEN IF I CAN'T HAVE THEM...

THOSE GRAPES (I.E. BOOZE) ARE SWEET!!

Even after the doctor told me not to drink, I didn't get a case of "sour grapes."

Y-YUM.

3%

SIP...

SIP...

3%

I timidly drank the can of chuhai with small sips.

BOOZE!! IS!! GREAT!! BOOZE!! IS!! JOY!!

KA-BOOM

ALCOHOL SHRINE

INCRED-IBLE!! AHHH!!

YEAH!

FESTIVAL

WOO!

I'M SO HAPPY !!!

THIS IS AMAZING !!!

That's how I broke the no-alcohol rule.

SIP...

FESTIVAL

PLEASE LET NOTHING HAPPEN WITH MY PANCREAS AND LIVER...

I left those in the corner of my room.

I CAN'T HAVE THIS...

LOADS OF FAT

RICE-BRAN SANDWICH CREMES

Oh, and I happened to win a pack of sandwich cremes?

OIL... OIL!!!

FAT AND OIL!!!

F- FAT !!!

KLA

TA

MU

NCH...

And when I got carried away by some-thing... I ate them.

THUMP

OIL... OIL!!

OIL !!!!

THUMP THUMP

SH

OIL!!!

DA

OIIIILL !!!

I also dropped out of the fat restriction plan.

IS *DELIC-IOUS* !!!!

OIL!!!

UM, HI. I'M HERE FOR MY CHECK-UP.

OH, COME ON IN!

SAY A PRAYER !!!

In that condition, I went for blood work and a CT scan on December 20.

HOW AM I IN THE CLEAR ?!

YOUR CHOLES-TEROL'S GONE DOWN, TOO!

208

TOTAL CHOLESTEROL

※ NORMAL RANGE: 130~220

I'M IN THE CLEAR ?!

YOUR γ-GTP IS AT FORTY-FIVE!

EXAM RESULTS

※ NORMAL RANGE: 16~73

BRUTALLY HONEST RETORT

NO!! I DRANK!!

YOU'RE DRINKING?

YOU **DID** STOP DRINK-ING!!

YOU CAN LIVE A LONG LIFE LIKE THIS~!!

LONG LIFE...

LIVER

BUT LOOK AT YOUR SCAN!

YOUR LIVER'S A PROPER COLOR NOW!!

My checkups ended on a good note as 2018 closed.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

LET'S SEE YOU AGAIN IN TWO MONTHS !!

He down-graded the "no booze at all" order.

OKAY ...

TAKE IT EASY ON THE ALCOHOL.

But my fiction storyboards were going absolutely nowhere.

As of January 2019, I'd only gotten the okay from my editor for nine pages.

JAN. 2019

OCT. 2018

SEP. 2018

I'd been prioritizing the story-boards from the hospital, but I'd hit a wall.

They left the door open for when I was drawing again. I was miserable at how I could barely get anywhere on my own.

.....

It was just too hard, so I asked to stop.

WELL, WITH ONLY NINE PAGES...

And the end client still hadn't approved the project.

Plus, I'd decided to go digital with the project and bought an iPad, putting me in the red.

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS SINCE **SEPTEMBER**, BUT IT'S NOT TURNING INTO A JOB...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT TO DO ANY-MORE.

IT'S LIKE...

OTHER STORYBOARDS

WHY CAN'T I WORK REGULARLY, LIKE OTHER ARTISTS...?

I spent about seven thousand yen* on self-esteem books.

WAYS TO CHANGE RIGHT NOW

SELF-CONFIDENCE

IMPROVE YOUR SELF-ESTEEM IN SEVEN DAYS

SELF-ESTEEM

YOUR OWN

GET YOUR SELF-ESTEEM UP

LIKING YOURSELF

My self-esteem was in a pit. It was so, *so* painful.

*ABOUT $65 U.S. DOLLARS.

And I upped my alcohol.

SHO-CHU

1.8ℓ

so weeks passed of me doing absolutely nothing.

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING AGAIN TODAY.

I couldn't concentrate on anything, or even work up the energy to take stuff in...

My unproductivity-induced guilt had already faded, so I spent more time on nothing...

DAZE

I read some articles and books, but they were all a bit off.

I wondered if there was a way to escape that life.

until one day, when a piece of writing smashed the seal inside me.

Before I knew it, I had devoured those 15,626 characters in a trance.

I casually opened an essay on the social media site *note*.

In the middle of the night on February 18/19...

It covered her life since child-hood.

note

DISABLED WITH NO PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

♡ LIKE

SASAKI NONOKA
2018/01/06 21:43

It was a piece by Sasaki Nonoka called "Disabled with No Physical Disabilities."

CHAPTER 10

Her ability to articulate concepts was so incredible that I couldn't look away, even from stuff I **wanted** to look away from.

It was *really* interesting. The most intriguing article I'd read in years.

NEXT MORNING

SHE'S SO GOOD WITH ***WORDS*** !!!

I'M STILL SAYING IT!

AHHHH!!!

IT'S *COOL*. IT'S THE BEST...!!

REVEALING YOURSELF THROUGH YOUR WORK IS AWESOME?!

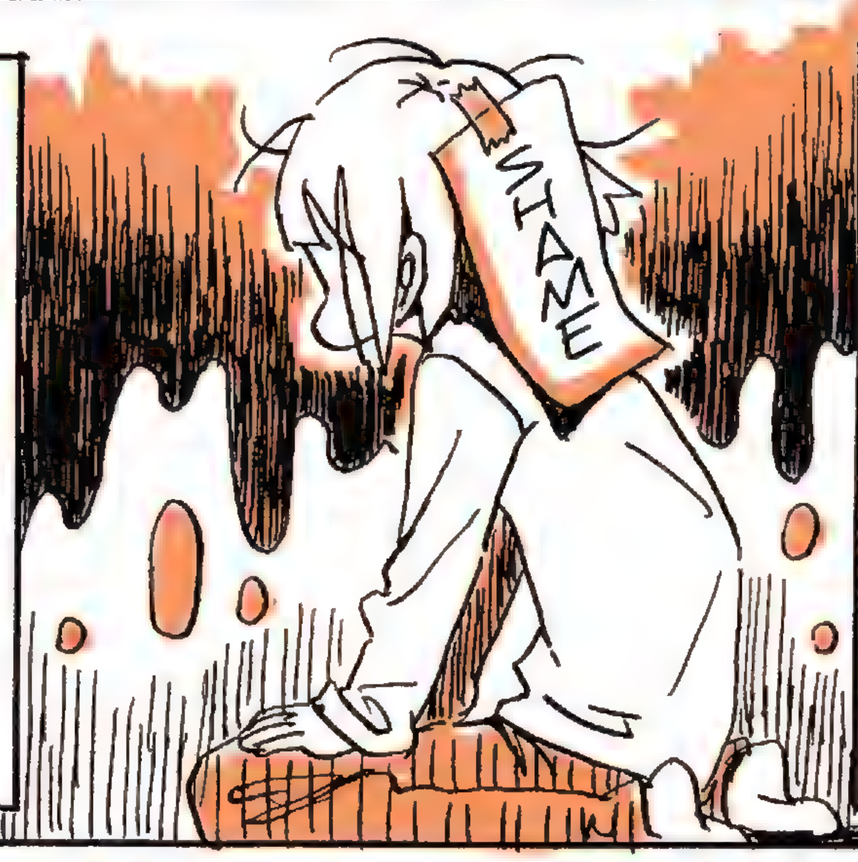
I MEAN...

KINDA COOL, AFTER ALL?!

I GUESS MEMOIRS ...

ARE MAYBE...

Writing auto-biographical stuff had been a **shameful** thing.



Inside of me, I'd taken the position: fiction > memoir.

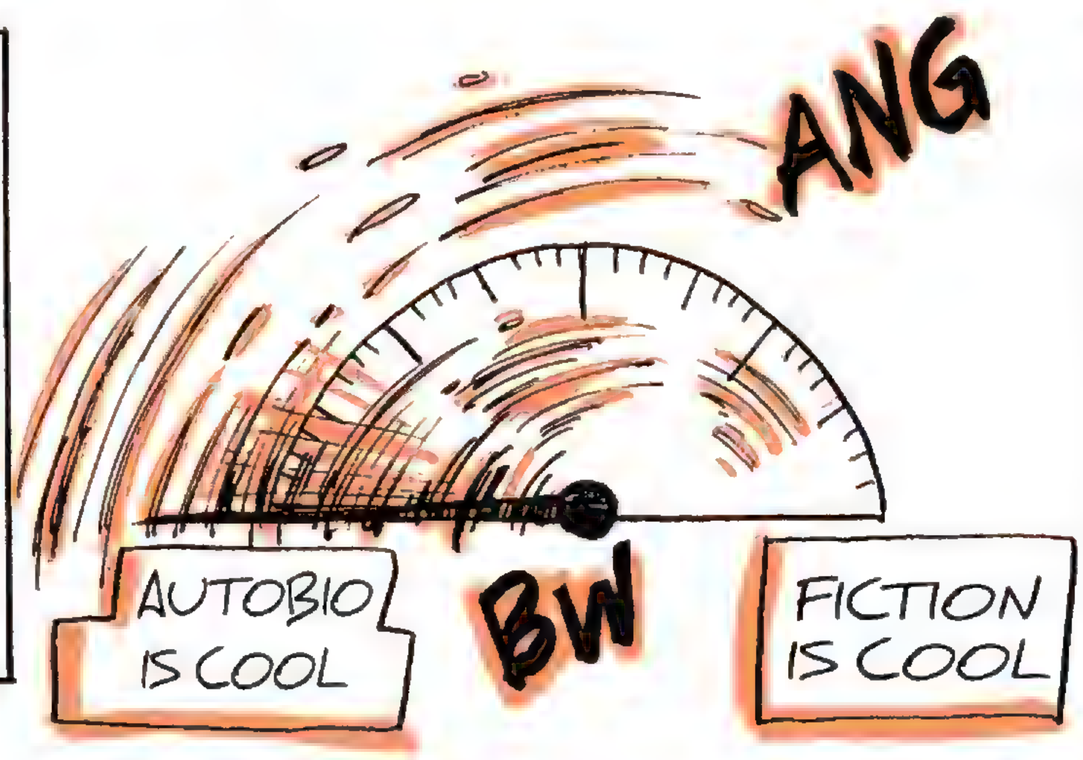
That surge of "revealing yourself rocks" washed away my fixations, my shame, and my guilt at upsetting my parents.

RAH!

I'VE GOTTA WRITE ABOUT MYSELF !!!

I'M GETTING OVER IT!!

I realized memoirs and diary manga were **cooler.**



My feelings did a total one-eighty on fiction versus memoir.

Still, I'd never Tweeted about my pancreatitis. I'd been *saving it for a manga.*

PEOPLE'LL PROBABLY COME AT ME, SAYING I'M AN ALCOHOLIC OR A BAD PERSON...

PLUS, I STOPPED STORY-BOARDING SO MANY TIMES...

IF PAIN HAS A VALUE, IT'S IN THE EXPERIENCE. THE **LESSON.**

THAT TIME LEFT ME WITH SOME-THING.

OH!

LIKE THAT TIME!

I DON'T WANT TO DO SOMETHING JUST BECAUSE IT SELLS...

THAT MIGHT BE HOW I CAN BEST CAPTURE EVERYTHING, THOUGH.

IT DOESN'T *HAVE* TO BECOME A MEMOIR.

BUT MAYBE **VIEWPOINT** IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING?!

POV

THAT STUFF'S IMPOR-TANT...

NO.

I WANT A MANGA WITH, LIKE, **LEARNING** OR **REALIZA-TIONS!**

AHA!

REALIZE

OR

LEARN

(OR SOME-THING!)

THAT'S WHAT MAKES A PIECE GOOD OR BAD, EVEN IF THE MATERIAL STAYS THE SAME!!

AND HOW TO PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER?

HOW DID YOU SEE THAT? HOW DID YOU FEEL?

POINT OF VIEW...

I'LL... PUT THAT REALIZATION NEAR THE END.

IT'S **YOUR** PERSPECTIVE AND **YOUR** VALUES THAT GIVE THE WORK MEANING! MAYBE THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...!!

COULD BE THAT.

"THE STORY OF A HEAVY-DRINKING MANGA CREATOR WHO GETS SICK, THEN GROWS A LITTLE AS AN ARTIST BY WRITING ABOUT IT."

FROM THE PERSPEC-TIVE OF A MEMOIR ARTIST?

OKAY, WHAT VIEWPOINT AM I LOOKING AT MY OWN LIFE FROM?

38°C

No! FAT!

NAUSEA

PANCREAS

and I started working on storyboards about pancreatitis, alcohol, and writing autobiographies. But...

HERE WE GO!

And so, the seal on memoirs was broken...

PLUS, WITHOUT ANY FEEDBACK, IT'S KINDA... NO FUN?

UHN-NN...

I'M STILL ANXIOUS ABOUT NOT BEING ABLE TO GET IT DOWN ON THE PAGE AGAIN...!

CAN I CHURN OUT AT LEAST ONE BOOK IF IT COULD BE MY DYING WORK, MAYBE?

With that in my head...

I pushed myself through the labor.

SORRY, PAST ME.

"MY NUMBER ONE CHOICE FOR WORK IS PROBABLY MANGA."

MAN. THAT INTERVIEW I IMMORTALIZED IN MY FIRST BOOK...

I HATE MANGA RIGHT NOW.

READ
11:11

OHHH ...!!

(OMITTED)
MAYBE YOU'RE SO STUCK NOW BECAUSE YOU FORBADE YOURSELF FROM DOING DIARY MANGA.
(OMITTED)

Right around this time, while doing the storyboards alone, I was texting with Uzuki Taeko-san.

11:11

YES, PLEASE DRAW ALL OF IT--THE PANCREATITIS, THE ALCOHOL!! IF PEOPLE COMPLAIN ABOUT YOU ONLINE YOU SHOULD ABSOLUTELY IGNORE THEM.

She gave me the push I needed.

I told her I was trying autobio again.

"Please free your own pen."

"I think, for a creator, losing the right to draw what you want is as serious as dying.



ED. ED. ED. ED. ED.

At the time, I had five editors, and each publisher had pros and cons.

There was just one more problem: which editor to ask.

SORRY TO SOUND BRAGGY...

I suddenly felt something that was like feedback.

Around page seven-teen...

I really struggled with it-- I even asked my doctor about it. I considered writing to all of them at once as I kept storyboarding.

ED.

On March 5, I got an answer from my editor.

BA-DMP

NERVOUS

I immediately sent the project overview and storyboards to the editor of my first book.

My hesitation was gone.

SEND

AHH

!!!

THANK YOU-- THIS IS THE BEST !!!

FROM: EDITOR

I TOOK A LOOK AT THE STORYBOARDS. AHH, IT'S AMAZING! (OMITTED) LET'S MAKE ANOTHER MEMOIR MANGA!

I bought flowers when I went out to fetch that cake, too.

RANUNCULUS FLOWERS

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

I'M SO HAPPY, I WANNA THANK ALL OF CREATION ...!

IT'S BEEN A WILD RIDE... TIME TO CELEBRATE! I'M GONNA GET SOME CAKE!

WALLET

I worked on this book with a smile on my face.

My Alcoholic Escape from Reality

CHAPTER 11

OH! COME ON IN!

UM, HI. I'M HERE FOR MY CHECK-UP.

In Chapter 9, my γ-GTP was fine for some reason, but...

I was screwed on my February 14 exam.

AHHHHH!!!

DU DUN

γ-GTP 91 ↑

NORMAL RANGE: 16~73.

NOW TELL ME... WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

A SYSTEM THAT MAKES TRYING WORTH-WHILE!

IT'S LIKE AN EFFORT METER!

IF I DO BETTER, THAT NUMBER'S GONNA CHANGE!

WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT...

WAIT.

UHN... I'VE GOTTA QUIT DRINKING ...!

I'LL... I'LL MAKE THE NEXT ONE LAST LONGER!

JUST OVER A WEEK?

4/19

I started marking my shochu with the date I'd opened it. I set a **time** to drink.

I'LL WORK HARD TO CUT BACK~! (BUT NOT QUIT.)

OH-KA-AAY!!

WHY ?!!

HIGHER THAN

γ-GTP 99↑

LAST TIME!!

※ NORMAL RANGE: 16~73

※ LAST TIME: 91

YOU'RE NOT REDUCING YOUR ALCOHOL ...?

I'M HERE FOR MY CHECK-UP!!

My follow-up tests were on March 14.

YEEEEEK!!

YOUR CHOLES-TEROL'S UP, TOO.

JUST LOOK AT THE RESULTS.

I *DID* DRINK LESS!!!

I'M FREE TO BUY IT NOW!!

HEY, THAT'S... THE SANDWICH I COULDN'T STOP STARING AT WHEN I WAS HOSPITAL-IZED!!

(※CH. 4.)

I... HUH?!

WAGH...

GIFT SHOP

?!!

PF

I took my first bite.

After more than five months of longing...

SANDWICH

MEDS

I was kinda shocked at just **how** not good.

NOT THAT GOOD...!!

IT'S...

UUUNGH...

COME IN!

I'M HERE FOR MY CHECK-UP...

But at my exam on April 18...

At that point, I let go even more and **really** drank.

HURDLE

I TRIED, BUT MY NUMBERS STILL WENT UP...

BOING

I'VE STOPPED UNDER-STANDING THIS.

HOOOW ~~?!!

IMPOSSIBLY NORMAL!!

γ-GTP	71

※NORMAL RANGE: 16~73

GOOD WORK AT LAYING OFF THE BOOZE!!

YOUR γ-GTP'S GONE DOWN!

PLEASE STOP!

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR RELATION-SHIP?!

I couldn't figure out how γ-GTP was connected to booze.

ALCO-HOL

γ-GTP

ANOTHER HONEST CONFESSION

YOU DID?!

I DRANK EVEN MORE !!

OF A REAL HUM-DINGER OF A CLOSER.

I HAVE TO THINK...

but I had no firm ending.

PAGE 90 OR SO

Anyway. I was digging into the final stages of the story-boards...

RELAPSING BACK INTO THE HOSPITAL.

OR SOME-THING...?

UHH...

I'VE BEEN TRYING SO HARD TO *AVOID* THAT!!

KA-T

NO, NO, *NO!* NO BLOOD SACRI-FICE!!

...

HURTS.

MY STOMACH...

HM?

I SAY AS I KEEP DRINKING...

MEMORY

MAYBE I'M COLD. I'LL TAKE SOME STOMACH MEDS.

THIS IS BAD !!!

TH-THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT BEFORE THE HOSPITAL ...!!

WAIT...

MAYBE 'CAUSE I'M COLD.

IT WAS JUST A THOUGHT-- I WASN'T SERIOUS! I'M SORRY!!

(I THINK!)

A-AND I WAS IMAGINING AN ENDING WHERE I RELAPSED!!

YEEK !!

WE'LL STOP IT FOR NOW!

THIS IS A PANCRE-ATITIS MED~!

OH, THERE WE GO!

THAT'S A SIDE EFFECT...

On top of everything, my white blood cell count had been dropping for a few months.

Quit-ting that medication scared me.

STEAM

STEAM

PUFF

PUFF

IT MIGHT JUST BE A CHILL. I'LL TRY TO WARM UP...

I-I'LL TAKE MY PRESCRIP-TION...

WHAT AM I GONNA DO?! *AUGH!*

GULP...

ORAL MEDS NAGATA KABI-SAMA

TOTALLY EXHAUSTED

AN HOUR OR SO LATER...

I GUESS I *WAS* COLD. WHAT A RELIEF, SERIOUSLY...

IT'S *BETTER.*

IT...

This was the cycle for a while.

SILENCE...

ARE YOU USE-FUL?! OR DEAD-LY?!

.....

PANCREAS

SAY SOME-THING!

There's *no* advantage to the pancreas being the "silent organ," so cut it out.

(STOP DRINK-ING.)

It's scary to know **nothing** about my pancreas.

SO, LIKE? TODAY, OKAY?

LIVER

PANCREAS

Currently, I'm off the pancreatitis meds-- the blood tests get us liver values.

I'M *NOT* DOING THAT!!

RELAPSE ENDING ...?!

HNGH!

Well, if I don't drink, I won't need to freak out about stomach-aches.

Speak up, will ya?

MAYBE YOU SHOULD COOL IT.

I really don't want it to wait until things are bad.

PANCREAS

WHAT I WAS THINKING, ANYWAY.

THAT'S...

TO SORTA ESCAPE THE UGLY THOUGHTS AND STUFF, TO AVOID THE GUILT.

BUT I KEEP DRINKING...

PSYCHOLOGY

ALCOHOL = ALCOHOL

??

UM, OKAY ...?

JAPA-NESE PEOPLE ... THINK ALCOHOL IS ALCOHOL.

EMAIL REPLIES

I'M DRINKING TO GET THROUGH MY WORK AND EMAILS-- I *CAN'T* WITHOUT IT.

WORK

DR UG

?!

OVERSEAS, ALCOHOL IS SEEN AS MORE OF A DRUG.

BUT IT'S DANGEROUS-- REMEMBER THE DOWNSIDE OF THE PLEASURE.

I DRINK ALCOHOL TOO, SO I UNDERSTAND THE APPEAL.

WHAT ?!

IF YOU DRANK IN A PUBLIC PLACE, YOU'D BE ARRESTED.

THEY'D LOCK ME UP IMMEDI-ATELY!

YOU'RE SO RIGHT !!!

LIKE ANY DRUG, YOU CAN'T BEAT IT BY TAKING IT.

THAT'S HOW YOU LOSE.

DUI

ALCOHOL

After that talk...

ALCOHOL

ARTIST'S RENDERING.

ALCOHOL'S NICE, BUT DANGEROUS.

I GUESS...

I stopped at Kakuyasu on my way home and bought a 1.8L carton of shochu.

UH, RIGHT...

THAT'LL BE 1,310 YEN*.

*ABOUT ¥12 U.S. DOLLARS.

CHAPTER 12

BUT WHY? MY AGE?

I FEEL LIKE IT CAME EASIER BACK THEN, AND I WAS WAY MORE INTO DRAWING...

31

28

I THINK...

IT'S HARDER THIS TIME AROUND ...!!

As I worked on my new book, like my first (and with the same editor), I noticed a difference.

PANT!

WHEEZE!

LIKE PICKING A WOUND THAT HASN'T HEALED...

THAT'S WHY I'M HAVING TROUBLE SEEING IT OBJECTIVELY-- I'M TOO CLOSE!!

LOOM

WAY TOO CLOSE!!

IT'S *PAIN-FUL!!!*

STUFF I'M WRITING ABOUT

LOOM

IT'S NOT THE SAME AT ALL!!!

THIS ONE ONLY COVERS THE LAST YEAR.

MY FIRST BOOK COVERED A DECADE.

WAIT, NO!!

AH!

I'VE FOLLOWED "I'LL DO IT" WITH "I CAN'T" TOO MANY TIMES! I'M SO UNSURE OF MYSELF!!

CAN I EVEN CALL MYSELF A MANGA ARTIST ANYMORE?!

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO ANY MANGA WORK FOR OVER A YEAR NOW!

This time, the urge to die has hit me again and again.

I HAVE TO *LIVE!!*

I CAN'T DIE NOW!

Even though it's only when I'm drafting that I think...

FRANTICALLY LOOKING BOTH WAYS AT CROSSWALK.

There was only pain written in my journal as I suffered through story-boarding.

AHHH! NOTH-ING IS EASY!!

Yet... I kept living to work on it. I was stuck in a loop.

Being alive was so hard that I avoided manga to make it easier.

was one of the only ways I could rescue myself.

FORM OTHER PEOPLE CAN READ...

OF

PO

HERE WE GO!

But drawing my experiences for other people to read...

MY LIFE

THANK YOU, DEAR READERS!

IT DOESN'T FIX EVERYTHING. IT'S STILL HARD TO BREATHE.

STILL...

Around the time I was somehow pushing forward with the story-boards...

They were happily posting away after finding a partner.

LOVE

AUTHOR

LOVER

I went back through a certain author's Tweets.

Before I knew it, I was drunk and outside.

DEAD OF NIGHT.

THIS, *UH...*

MAKES ME WANNA JUMP INTO A TAXI AND GO STRAIGHT TO THE OCEAN.

WAAUUUGH!

I smoked and cried in front of my house.

SOB!

EVERYONE I HAVE A CRUSH ON HAS *SOMEONE ELSE!*

-POV

I might've done it if I'd been living alone-- but since I lived with my parents, I gave up and wandered the neighborhood.

OR... "I NEED A CAB TO THE SEA."

THE OCEAN, PLEASE.

DRIVER

THAT'S JUST WONDER-FUL..!

"I'M SO HAPPY FOR THEM!"

GOES ONE OF TWO WAYS.

MY REACTION WHEN I SEE PEOPLE IN LOVE...

I WENT BACK INSIDE.

THE VITAL CRUX OF MY HEART...

THAT HAPPENS WHEN I SEE SOME-THING I *DESPERATELY* WANT BUT HAVE NEVER GOTTEN.

MY UNHAPPY RE-ACTION ...

I THINK MY HAPPY REACTION ...

IS FOR STUFF I'M FINE WITH, EVEN OUTSIDE FICTION.

AND THINGS I COULD ONCE GET MYSELF.

PHOTOS

FI NE!!

I'M LONELY AND WANNA LOVE AND BE LOVED-- THAT'S THE THEME HERE...

THE VITAL CRUX OF MY HEART IS LOVE.

OH... I GET IT.

HUH...?

THERE *IS* A THEME IN MY LIFE I SHOULD BE WRITING ABOUT!!!

LUR

CH

WAIT, THAT'S IT!!

I WANDERED OFF COURSE, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M BACK TO MY ROOTS NOW.

LONELINESS AND LOVE.

AND THAT'S MY VERY SELF.

I NEED TO PROTECT MY HEALTH TO DO THAT!!

YES! I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULDN'T DRAW ANYMORE, BUT I CAN DRAW ALL **KINDS** OF STUFF!!

HEALTH!

PANCREAS

I WANNA DO MEMOIRS *AND* FICTION !!

COULD I DRAW THOSE SUBJECTS IN FICTION, TOO?!

AH ...!!

That story might take a long time.

LONELINESS, LOVE...

SO... THAT'S IT, HUH?

I'm only ending **this** tale.

But I hope we'll meet again at the next opportunity.

38.5°C

PANCREAS

NAUSEA

My Alcoholic Escape from Reality

SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

MY Alcoholic ESCAPE FROM REALITY

(true) story & art by **NAGATA KABI**

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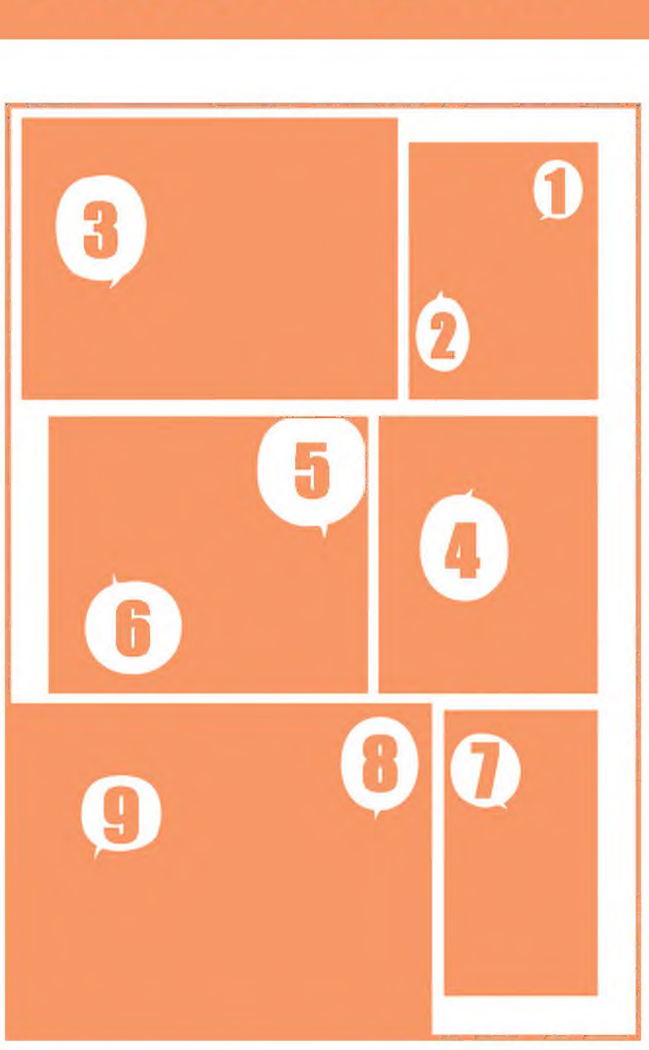
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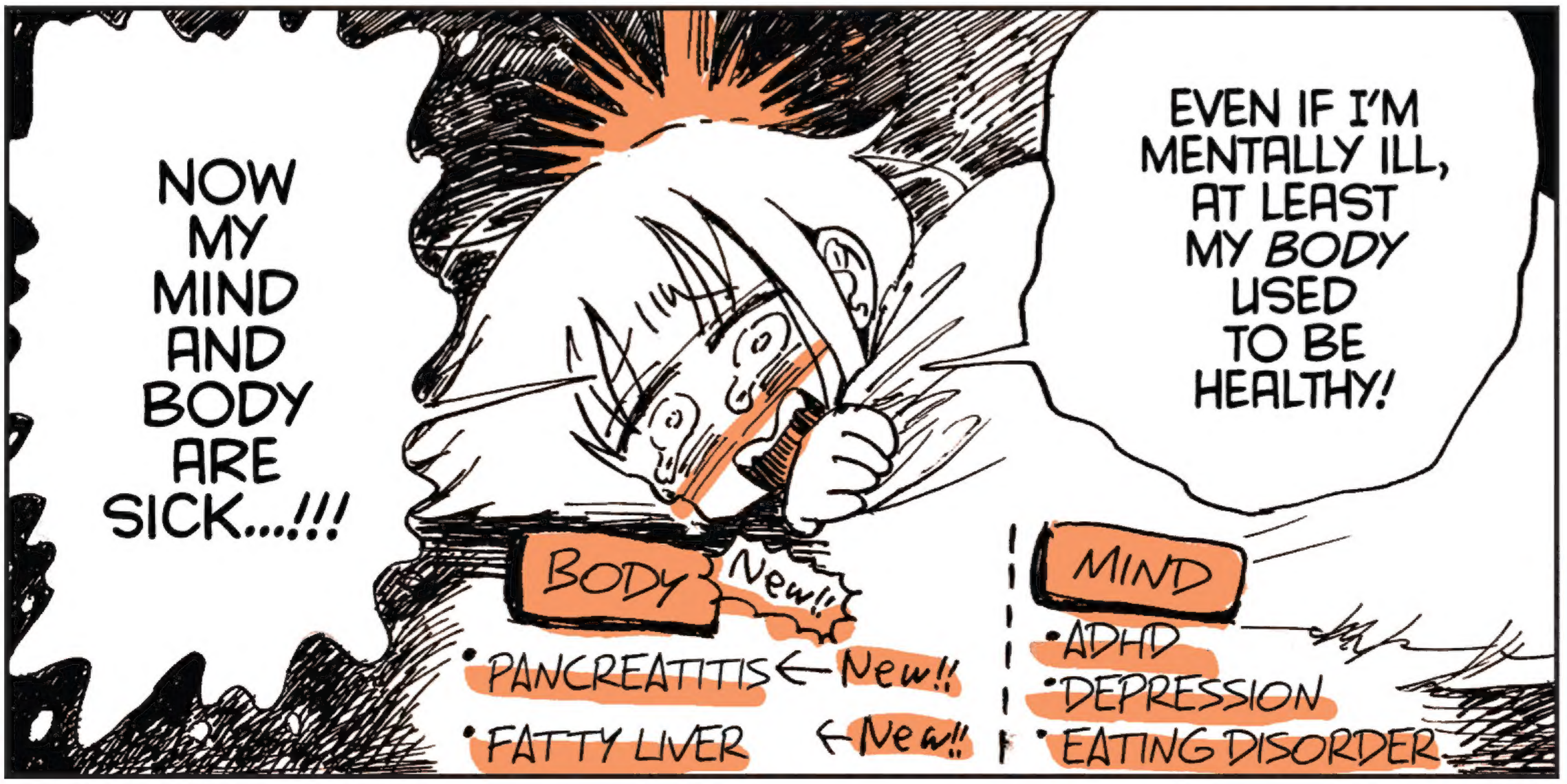
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READING DIRECTIONS

This book reads from ***right to left***, Japanese style. If this is your first time reading manga, you start reading from the top right panel on each page and take it from there. If you get lost, just follow the numbered diagram here. It may seem backwards at first, but you'll get the hang of it! Have fun!!



An emotional new diary manga about critical illness from award-winning creator Nagata Kabi.



Nagata Kabi's downward spiral is getting out of control, and she can't stop drinking to soothe the ache of reality. After suffering from unbearable stomach pains, she goes to a clinic, where she is diagnosed with pancreatitis—and is immediately hospitalized. A new chapter unfolds in Nagata Kabi's life as she struggles to find her way back to reality and manga creation in the wake of her breakdown.

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